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Touro College Flatbush Division

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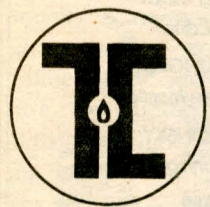


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TOURO TRANSCRIPT

Vol. 3 No. 1

A Publication of the Touro College Flatbush Division

Spring 1997

STUDENTS PROTEST FOR DEMOCRACY

The Report of a Touro Student Who Joined the Crowds Demanding Fair Government in Serbia

by Chaim Estulin



The opposition party *Zayedno* protests the unfairness of the government in Serbia.
(Chaim Estulin)

"Your people have problem with Muslims, my people have problem with Muslims," intoned Charlemagne, a student, the head of security for the protest, and a former soldier, upon welcoming me to his country, Serbia, one of the

two remaining states in the Federation of Yugoslavia. "We almost brothers," he added.

After four years of war with the Croats and with the Muslims of Bosnia, the Dayton Accords lulled the Serbs into thinking that life

would finally return to normal. But, late in November of 1996, its citizens were once again reminded of the instability of the region. They had gone to the polls for municipal elections, and in fourteen of the nineteen major cities, a majority had voted for the opposition, the *Zayedno* ("together") coalition. President Slobodan Milosevic, who is also the leader of the ruling socialist (former communist) party, annulled the results, citing unspecified "irregularities."

As one student put it: "The cup had spilled over!" The residents of all the major cities in Serbia gathered in their respective city centers to protest the sabotage of their collective will. In the capital, Belgrade, every afternoon the

citizens, led by the students of Belgrade University, marched through the city; the students were as angry as every one else about the election, but they were also angry at their dean for not supporting the democracy movement.

On Monday, January 20, the day that America celebrated the birthday of one of our greatest protesters, Martin Luther King, "Slobo," as Milosevic is often mockingly called, sent a police cordon to stop the "walks," the marches through Belgrade. Provoked, the students gathered in front of the cordon on Kalachava street in the center of the city, vowing to remain there until the walks were reinstated.

I arrived in Belgrade Thursday night, January 23, as a fellow student and votary of

democracy. For four incredible days I felt like Forrest Gump; I stood as a peer in the freezing weather at Kalachava, and sat schmoozing in the Philosophy Faculty Building, the student movement headquarters. Every student had a story, a personal reason for the demonstrations being the only option. As a group they may chant the same slogans, but as individuals, each had his own, subtly different priority. Sunday afternoon, I first met Ivan (a pseudonym, as are all the names in this article), a severe, dark and good looking 23-year-old engineering student, who is half Croatian, half Serbian, and a non-religious Christian in a country that had been fighting the Christian Croats. Although he

continued on page 5

Hypnosis Forum Hosted by Psychology Club

by Toby Schwarzman

On Wednesday, February 26th, members of the Touro College Psychology Club gathered for a forum on the controversial topic of hypnosis. The forum was led by Chaya Mermerstein, C.S.W., who specializes in this area.

Ms. Mermerstein was invited to Touro College to discuss the methodology behind hypnotherapy and its history, as well as to demonstrate the various hypnotic techniques while discussing their place in clinical practice.

Ms. Mermerstein currently works for Beth Israel Medical Center in the department of child and adolescent psychiatry. She has studied hypnotherapy with the late Dr. Milton Erickson and uses this technique as a key therapeutic method within her practice.

At the intimate gathering, the male and female students who attended were captivated

by the stimulating lecture, which enlightened them on the development and the use of this method of treatment. Ms. Mermerstein began by asking the students whether or not they had ever been in a trance. The general consensus was that they had not, until Ms. Mermerstein drew parameters explaining what the word actually referred to. Explaining that staring at any single point such as a picture or the lines on a road can lead one to fall into a trance, she described the experience of a trance-like state.

The word "trance" was defined as an altered state of consciousness during which the subject focuses inward on an inner light or inner life. Day-to-day examples were given, such as when a person gets so involved in an activity such as reading a book, that they are unaware when someone

tries to get their attention. Having focused on a specific task, they are unaware of their environment.

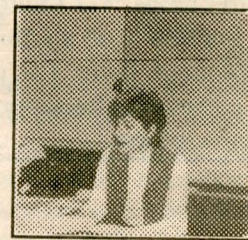
In a trance state, which therapists can induce through the use of hypnosis, subjects become highly suggestible. Under such conditions, therapists can lead them to open up and draw out important information from their unconscious in a therapeutic manner. What is so beneficial about the use of hypnosis in treatment is that the therapist's commands filter into the patient's unconsciousness as if spoken in the patient's voice, apparently bringing about the phenomena of self-healing. The inducement of a trance state can be brought about by various means, such as focusing on a single object, or by a physical stimulus such as stroking.

Many people fear the loss

of control that they imagine comes along with hypnosis. Though conventional wisdom dictates that in a hypnotic trance the subject can be made to do all types of activity they would not do while in control of their faculties, in reality the subject will do only what he would willingly do while not entranced.

Interestingly, hypnosis has been around for thousands of years. The Egyptians are the first to have used it in the sleep temples they originated. There, subjects were given an opportunity to cut off all forms of stimulus and withdraw completely through relaxation. This practice was used as a calming and relaxing technique. Today hypnosis is used to help insomniacs, reduce the pain of cancer patients, and deal with phobias and somatic symptoms.

To demonstrate what one



Chaya Mermerstein, C.S.W., guest lecturer at the Psychology Club meeting.

(Alex Later)

experiences when one is in a trance state, Ms. Mermerstein ended the forum with a short session of hypnosis. The students experienced first hand the suggestibility that comes along with a trance state, as their limbs moved about following the instructions of the soothing voice of Ms. Mermerstein. Overall the students enjoyed the enlightening forum, which gave them an opportunity to see a psychological theory they had discussed in the classroom highlighted in practice.

EDITORIALS

• PURIM'S LESSON

The story of Purim is an age-old story. The unrenowned, timid Esther suddenly becomes Queen of a huge empire, thus gaining the influence necessary to save her oppressed people. Although she did first become queen, Esther was at heart an average Jewish woman, not spectacular in any way. Yet it was this woman who brought about the salvation of her people in their time of need.

We are currently in a time of need. The Jewish people today need an Esther for our Hamans, a David for our Goliaths. Although we think we have the necessary dignitaries and emissaries to pull off a great deliverance from our enemies, what we really need is an unexceptional Jew to accomplish the exceptional. So while we point to our leaders to lead the way, we must accept responsibility upon ourselves to bring about change from below. It is not enough to fight the Hamans by diplomatic "talks." We need to fight the Hamans in our daily talks, our prayers to our Leader and our own personal actions.

• FIGUREHEAD CLINTON

Any effective politician is supposed to take a decisive stand on the prevalent issues of the times. Lincoln was great because he firmly opposed slavery. FDR was notable because he took authoritative action in support of the poor after the Great Depression.

Clinton, though, seems not to know what decisive action is.

Campaign Finance reform is a hot topic today. Republicans are calling for it after the scandals of the White House "hotel" contributions. Clinton is calling for it, saying that he is all for regulating contributions. Yet Clinton still attends fund-raisers at an alarmingly high rate. No problem there. The problem is that this comes after he supported campaign finance reform.

Make up your mind, President Clinton.

• THIS OLD HOUSE

The Avenue J campus of Touro College is the newest and probably most attractive building of the institution. There is no reason for the state of the building to be as it currently is.

No sign announces the building's function to passersby. The hallway walls are bare; it looks like a hospital. And the classroom walls are missing the obvious necessities of a functioning setting of higher education. No maps are available for history classes. No globes are obtainable on a lending basis from the library. Supplies in general are limited.

Several weeks ago, a professor complained that the phone on his desk was missing the connecting cable to its outlet. After repeatedly requesting a replacement, frustration led him to purchase one on his own. Chairs are apparently a rare commodity in Touro College. They are locked inside inner faculty offices to ensure that those responsible for the "chair count" do not lose any precious chairs. Thus, any faculty members with desks outside of the inner offices are forced to find chairs from other, unlocked offices in order to work at their desks. Light bulbs were requested for a student office. The students were told that Touro was "out" of those light-bulbs. They were forced to move their work elsewhere. It was either that or they sit in the dark.

What is going on? When we attended our first classes at the Avenue J campus, we were impressed with its modern facilities. Modern, perhaps, but they are proving to be less reliable and less accessible than would be expected in an institution of higher learning.

It's time the Touro College facilities are brought up to the standard that a school of exceptional students demands.

MAZEL TOV
TO
RENEE BLINDER
Student Counselor

UPON THE BIRTH
OF A BABY BOY!

The Editors of the Touro Transcript

TOURO TRANSCRIPT

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TOURO COLLEGE

Office of the Dean of Students

1602 Avenue J
Brooklyn, N.Y. 11230

March, 1997

Dear Touro Students,

As the Spring Semester enters its second month, many students experience increased pressure in their academic work. In this column I offer some straightforward advice on how to best handle college work:



• **Become a disciplined learner**—Successful students realize that it is best to develop a routine for studying and completing assignments. Block out a designated daily time period for academic work and stick to this schedule. If you have no assignments, read ahead in your course textbooks; do not deviate from the routine that you have chosen. The technique of last-minute exam cramming is enervating and usually does not yield good results.

• **Establish priorities**—In assessing your academic work, establish priorities for various courses/subjects and allocate your time accordingly. Realize that courses in the natural sciences and mathematics require extra concentration. Be realistic in your projections: A good term paper cannot be written over one weekend.

• **Be inquisitive and review**—Develop the habit of asking questions in class. In your textbook readings, highlight main concepts and leading ideas. After completing a section or chapter, immediately do a quick review focusing at least on passages you have underlined. In covering quantitative subjects, be sure to do as many practice problems as possible.

• **Learn to handle pressure**—All of us must learn to cope with the pressures and little crises of daily life. Remember, you are not the only one facing hurdles. Systematic study habits will minimize the difficult moments in a semester. Always keep your mind focused on your ultimate degree goals.

• **Seek advice and assistance**—If you develop a problem in a course, speak to your instructor early in the semester, not one week before finals. If tutoring is needed, be sure to obtain such assistance much in advance of the test dates. And remember, our counselors can provide academic and personal guidance, all confidential, to help you resolve the dilemmas and problems you may confront during your undergraduate career. Their office hours are posted at the Evening Studies Office (Room 209).

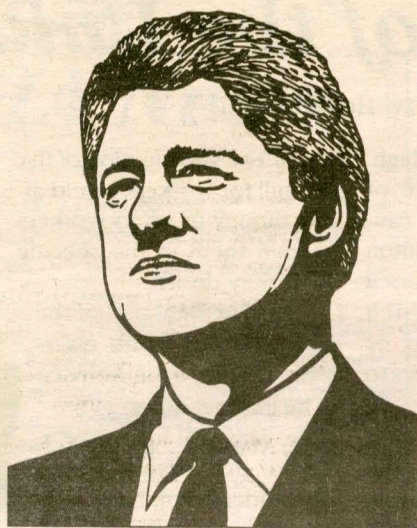
I wish you success in your mid-term examinations.

Sincerely Yours,

Robert Goldschmidt
Dean Robert Goldschmidt

Mr. President?

by Toby Schwarzman



We, the American people, can take all kinds of surprises. Nothing shocks us anymore, not grisly murders nor illegalities of the oddest nature. But suddenly our 40th president is making history, and not in any way that pleases him or the American people he leads. From the purchase of a night's stay in the Lincoln bedroom to inauguration souvenirs for sale on the Home Shopping Network, the highest office in the land is being dragged through the mud in a manner that is quite shocking. What makes the situation even more surprising is that this is being done by a president who, possibly more so than any previous one, is highly focused on how he will go down in history. It is to this end that President Clinton has taken careful steps to highlight as the main issue for the coming term an area in which he can't go wrong, a highly attractive prospect for a president who seems to draw every impossible scandal.

It sounds quite impressive by anyone's standards: Overhaul the education system to increase tax credits for college tuition, supplement scholarship programs, and guarantee every student a minimum of two years of a college education. In choosing this area as a target for his second and final term, the president aims to accomplish what will catapult him into the annals of history surrounded by the awe and reverence given to presidents such as Lincoln, FDR and JFK. But what Clinton's entourage of advisors and public relations gu-

rus are forgetting is one important aspect, which is the decisive factor in history's rating of a president—daring.

Yes, Clinton may successfully reformulate education policy, creating greater availability of alternate means of financial aid, but his accomplishments will never be earth-shattering. They will never change a generation and all those who follow as did the social reforms of FDR, nor will they have the resounding effects brought about by the emancipation of generations of slaves. Lincoln took a great risk, clearly revealing where he stood on the most controversial topic of the era. No one ever accused him of flimflamming. For clearly there never was, nor will be, someone remembered for glory when all they did was relieve themselves of the responsibility of standing up for their beliefs.

Clinton indeed once tried to make a difference, i.e., in the health care system, but he lacks the necessary backbone to stand up to the myriads of special interest groups and lobbyists who fear the possibility of reforming that behe-

moth. Instead, Clinton has now chosen an area in which he can do little harm.

There are no studies that say a population with less education is more likely to succeed, and there is no one who denies that education will reduce many of the problems of American youth—from poor children who turn to crime for lack of any other option and inner city families who live on subsistence levels due to lack of better job training. A country populated by educated citizens is a healthier country, aware of fundamental ideas from voting to the importance of preventative health care. And so, in effect, what Clinton has chosen is a well-paved path. Though it may not be easy for him to secure the necessary funding, no one will attack his premise regarding its importance.

But it is precisely for this reason that Clinton should take heed, for immortality is only bestowed upon those who earn it. The very thing that makes his choice so attractive due to its lack of controversy will inevitably diminish the reverberations of its accomplishment.

What someone neglected to tell the president and his policy advisors is something that is quite intuitive. Conventional wisdom states that the fish that swim with the flock are remembered as just that—part of the flock. So to secure his mark on America and to stand out for posterity, President Clinton must take risks. Either way he'll be remembered more—whether for bad or for good.

Letter to the Editor

Recently I have noticed many signs cropping up around on the bulletin boards around the campus of Touro Flatbush. The Women's Science Association, the Political Science Association, the Debating Team, the Women's Computer Society, etc., are all making their mark on this fine institution.

What has occurred to me recently is the fact that the bulk of the new student activities began within the last few months. All of these ground breaking events took place after the fantastic efforts of the staff of the *Touro Tran-*

script were initiated.

This chain of events reveals an interesting occurrence. Clearly there is some connection between the publication of the *Touro Transcript* and the organized student activities in Touro College. The *Transcript* has provided more than just a forum for discussion. It has created a campus life, a focal point for students to gather, both literally and figuratively. It is through the efforts of the newspapers' dedicated staff in drawing attention to the current Touro College student activities and events that these

developments have taken place. Through reading the bimester issues, students have become encouraged to take an active part in participating in a campus life, in an effort to enhance their college experience. In this way, that the *Transcript* has greatly exceeded what I had originally thought it was meant to accomplish. I feel that every Touro student owes a true debt of gratitude for the transformation that the *Transcript* has helped bring about.

yours,
R. L. Cohen

SOCIETY'S DECISION

by Shoshana Berkovic

London, 1985. A classroom in Beth Jacob Teacher's Seminary. The sun shone brilliantly through a window that had never known shades as I sat at my desk, somewhat bored, as the teacher droned on about a subject in which I had little interest.

Suddenly, the handle of our classroom door turned and in walked our principal. All eyes turned in surprise toward this unexpected visitor. Horrors! He was beckoning

me! What had I done now? I tried to recollect any offense I may have committed in the recent past, but, to my relief, nothing came to mind. What could he possibly want?

It turned out that I was called to meet the father of a boy to find out if I was an interesting match for his son. I was quite startled. I was young, only eighteen, and hadn't yet considered marriage as something about which I had to think seriously. I had to go, though, since the man would be waiting for me and it would have been rude not to. I reasoned that it would all most probably come to nothing anyway; even if this man liked me and I did get to meet his son, how many girls actually get engaged to the first guy they meet?

Half an hour later I found myself in the dining room of the family I was staying by that year, tracing the pattern of the lace tablecloth with my finger. I don't remember an iota of

what I said to the man with the long grey beard sitting opposite me, but he was obviously impressed with me—I was told that I was to meet his son the next day.

Two or so meetings later in that same dining room, I was asked if I was interested

in marrying the boy. (He had to return to the U.S. the next day to attend his sister's engagement.) I couldn't think of any reason to say no, and so we were engaged.

The next day it hit me—I had just agreed to marry a guy I hardly knew and live in a country I had only visited once, as a young child! Though I had been assured that he had been thoroughly checked out, I was terrified at the magnitude of what I had committed myself to. I'd have to move to a strange city in a far off country and live with a man I had only met several times. Panic set in. I was such a nervous wreck, I couldn't even go to the airport to see him off!

My wedding was a blur. I remember having to shake hands and smile till both my arms and face ached, but little else. A week later, after *sheva brachos* were over, I was on a plane to New York with my new husband and his family.

Well, here I am eleven years later. I am still living in New York and still married to the same guy I'd said "Yes" to that warm day in London, but I wonder sometimes if I did the right thing.

**A
Match
Made in
Heaven?**



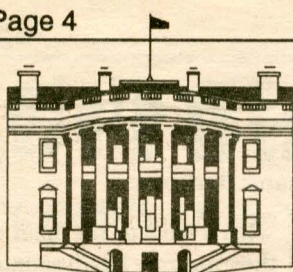
Corrections

The editors of the *Transcript* want to make the following corrections:

- In the article "The Galus of Today: Hebron, A Perspective," it was stated that there "are five hundred Jewish families" living in Hebron. While we wish that it were so, there are only about 500 Jewish people currently living in the city.

- The "News Analysis" contained a misleading state-

ment about individuals who influence the president in areas of foreign policy. William McNamara, Casper Weinberger and James Baker were not all Secretaries of State. Rather, while Baker was indeed Secretary of State under President Bush, the other two were Secretaries of Defense: McNamara under Kennedy and Weinberger under Reagan.



NEWS ANALYSIS

The State of the Union

By Tzvi Hersh Jungreis

In his second term State of the Union Address on January 20, 1997, President Bill Clinton called us to action.

He began his speech by saying, "We face no imminent threat, but we do have an enemy. The enemy of our time is inaction! So tonight I issue a call to action: Action by this Congress, action by our states, by our people, to prepare America for the 21st century; action to keep our economy and democracy strong for all our people; action to strengthen education and harness the forces of technology and science; action to build stronger families and stronger communities and a safer environment; action to keep America the world's strongest force for peace, freedom and prosperity. And above all, action to build a more perfect union here at home."

In this "call to action" the President focused on four main issues:

- 1) Balancing the budget
- 2) Education
- 3) Campaign finance reform
- 4) Welfare

BALANCING THE BUDGET

Both the Republican and Democratic parties would like to balance the budget. The Republicans have tried for the second time to pass a constitutional amendment demanding that by the year 2002, a balanced budget would be legally required. The deciding vote of defeat was cast by Senator Bob Toricelli (D) of New Jersey. Although he himself is in favor of a balanced budget, he represents the view of those who feel that the balanced budget in the form of an amendment could be harmful since an amendment would not leave much room for flexibility. For example, in case of an emergency (outside of military or national emergencies, which are provided for in the amendment), precious funds might be delayed due to the necessary constitutional maneuvering if the budget would be signed into law.

The Democrats are just as zealous to balance the budget; however, they echo the fears of Bob Toricelli, claiming that an amendment would

be to inflexible in terms of reality. Additionally, in order to implement the amendment plan of the Republicans, severe cutbacks would have to be made in such "sacred cow" areas of the Democratic party, like welfare, Medicaid and Social Security.

However, while it is a noble idea to have a balanced budget without any major cutbacks, it is entirely impossible. Besides, the Democrats have yet to prepare an impressive plan that would fit into reality.

On the other hand, the Republican party, not wanting to be deemed as the party of cruelty, would like to make their cutbacks in social spending as lenient as possible. This is very nice on the part of the Republicans. However, the Republican party does not want to raise taxes, which are necessary in order to fund social spending programs that would be cut back only minimally on the amendment plan.

Thus, between the Democrats not wanting to install cutbacks in social spending and the Republicans not wanting to raise the necessary taxes, there is no potentially realistic plan on the table.

EDUCATION

Education was chosen by Clinton to be the main focus of the administration over the next four years. Within four years he would like to ensure that every eight-year-old be able to read, every twelve-year-old be able to log on to the internet, every 18-year-old be able to go to college, and every adult American be able to keep on learning. Clinton is allotting an unprecedented \$51 billion for education next year, along with a new plan, *A Call to Action For American Education*, which is based on the following ten steps:

1) A national crusade for an education standard, which should reflect what every student should know for the twenty-first century. Every state should shape its curricula accordingly.

2) An allotment in the budget that would allow an additional 100,000 people to receive certification as "master teachers", which would help ensure that their teach-

ing levels would be kept high.

3) Right now, 40% of American eight-year-olds cannot read. Therefore, Clinton is introducing the "America Reads Initiative," which would build a group of 1,000,000 citizen volunteers to teach children how to read. 100,000 college students are also requested to join, and already 60 college presidents from around the country have volunteered the service of their students.

All interested Touro students can speak to Dean Goldschmidt if they wish to volunteer...

4) The Head Start program is slated to be expanded to include 1,000,000 children by the year 2002.

5) Parents will be given the right to choose which public school they wish to send their child to. This will foster competition between schools and force them to be more creative in their curricula. Also, there will be an additional 3,000 charter schools (privately run and financed schools) by the turn of the century, which would make schools more accountable for their activities.

6) In order to address the growing problem of immorality in American youngsters, Clinton has made a call for all schools to include character education courses in their curricula.

7) Clinton would like to reinstall a sense of pride in students in how they feel about their school, and to help create a perfect learning environment for them. To ease the route to achieving this goal, there will be funding of \$20 billion over the next four years, allocated specifically for school construction and renovation.

8) To make two years of college accessible to all, a \$1,500 tax credit will be allowed for tuition-paying families (a sum that is large enough to pay for a year at a community college) and up to a \$10,000 tax deduction on all post high-school tuitions, along with the biggest increase in Pell Grants in over twenty years.

9) The introduction of the G.I. bill for workers would allow money to go to workers to train them in the specific skills they desire.

10) The final part of the plan calls for every classroom and library in America to be internet-accessible. This will help ensure that American students will be on par with their counterparts as we go deeper and deeper into the information age.

The Clinton education plan is admirable but quixotic, as it confronts the harsh realities of a balanced budget. In addition to shoring up the educational system, families are slated to receive tuition-based tax credits, an increase in Pell Grants, plus the where-withal for every student to attend at least a two-year community college; it seems ridiculous that \$51 billion will be enough to cover all of this. (Does anyone remember the great hope and promise of the Clinton health-care reform bill back in 1992? There are now ten million children without health insurance, 80% of whom have parents who are full-time workers.)

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

In effect, campaign finance reform would curb spending, reduce the influence of special interest groups, create a level playing field between challengers and incumbents, and ban contributions from non-citizens, all corporate sources and the other large soft money contributors of both parties.

Obviously, this was Clinton's answer to the repeated charges that many contributors (including those of questionable reputation) may have been exerting undue influence on American, foreign, and domestic policy due to their donations to the party. There were also many who felt that the dignity of the office had been compromised and commercialized with the "selling" of privileges, such as sleeping in the White House Lincoln Bedroom.

Meanwhile, despite Clinton's lofty moral tone, he does not seem to practice what he preaches. Every time the issue has been brought up there has been a flat denial of wrongdoing, and many questionable practices of rewarding major contribu-

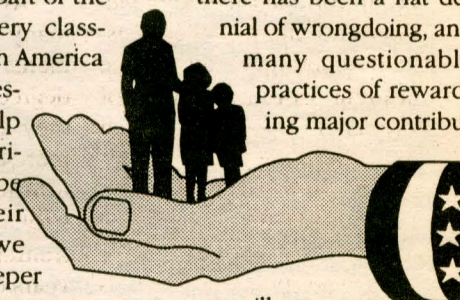
tors are still commonplace in this administration.

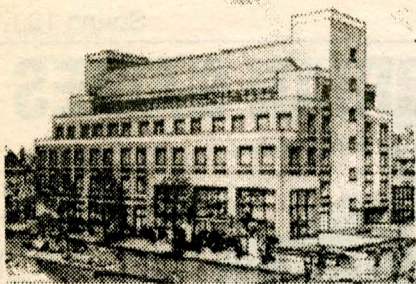
WELFARE

Welfare reform is an idea whose time has definitely come. The idea is to generally replace welfare with "workfare." (Workfare is when able-bodied individuals who have been on welfare for a designated amount of time must go to work and lose their benefits, such as food stamps, etc...). However, the practical steps have not been thought out well. There are not enough job training programs in place; there is a lack of day care centers to accommodate working welfare mothers; and there are not enough provisions left in the law for the elderly and actually disabled people. And, in general, there are not enough provisions for the transition from welfare to workfare. What will happen if someone cannot find a job in the allotted time and they are cut off from food stamps or Medicaid benefits?

In conclusion, while one cannot help but look at the state of the union as a whole and paint a rosy picture for the future, as Clinton said in his opening statement, "We have won back the basic strength of our economy. With crime and welfare roles declining, we are winning back our basic optimism, the enduring faith that we can master any difficulty. With the cold war receding and global commerce at record levels, we are helping to win unrivaled peace and prosperity all across the world."

However, we will have to wait and see in the coming days and months what the effect of a balanced budget and a lame-duck Democratic president along with a Republican Congress will translate to over the next four years.





TOURO UPDATE

CLUBS & ORGANIZATIONS

NSSLHA News

by Staff Writers

The Touro chapter of NSSLHA recently took part in a stimulating learning experience. FOCUS, a support group for aphasic stroke victims and their loved ones, holds monthly meetings in the Student Union building of Brooklyn College. On March 12, Touro College speech pathology students joined the support circles to hear and see for themselves the incredible challenges these individuals face every day of their lives. It was a valuable learning experience that no classroom could ever provide. In addition, it was an excellent opportunity for those students interested in working with the adult and geriatric population to interact with them on a personal basis.

FOCUS was initiated 17

years ago by Dr. Gail Gurland, director of the speech pathology program at Brooklyn College.

Aphasic patients have many types of speech impairments resulting from varying degrees of paralysis. Together, they all express a desire for more effective means of communication. Many of the stroke survivors have made tremendous progress with years of therapy and rehabilitation. Their spirit for life and hope for a better future is a real inspiration for all aspiring speech language pathologists.

For more information about FOCUS or to make reservations for a future meeting, please contact NSSLHA chapter presidents Shaindy Klein and Alonna Bondar.

Politics in Touro

by David Greenfield, President

Dozens of students took part in the two membership meetings of the *Touro College Political Science/Pre-Law Association*. After months of planning, the association had finally received approval and swiftly began to take action. The successful meetings discussed the goals and agenda of this exclusive association.

The following goals had been enumerated:

- Updating Touro students on political developments at every level—local, state, and federal.
- Voter Registration Drives for students, enabling them to take action upon their beliefs.
- Lectures and Events geared toward the Political Science/Pre-Law interest.
- Forums and Discussions to enable students to discuss and debate their views.

The *Political Science/Pre-Law Association* has also formed a prestigious newsletter entitled *Equal Justice*. It will cover major political issues, exciting news, mystifying op-eds, and will enable Touro College students to voice their political opinions. *Equal Justice* is due to hit Touro College in April. Also scheduled for the near future is a fascinating guest speaker/political personality. Keep your eyes peeled for the formal announcement.

All students who are planning to attend law school or are interested in politics are urged to join this prestigious association. For more information on joining the *Political Science/Pre-Law Association* or participating in any capacity regarding the publication of *Equal Justice*, please contact myself, David Greenfield, or the Vice President, Malky Tannenbaum. We'd be more than glad to assist you.

The Jewish Action Alliance

by Yitzchok C. Fingerer

With the publication of the first issue of *The Touro Vort*, great strides have been made. I would like to share with you what it is that *The Jewish Action Committee* and its weekly publication, *The Touro Vort*, would like to accomplish.

The period of time between the 1920's and 1930's has been described as a wonderful era. Technological advances coupled with assurances of a

strong economic future instilled deep feelings of patriotism in the minds of the American people. Streets were safe and clean. Small businesses prospered. People were civilized and cultured, humanistic and caring. The nation was under the extremely able leadership of its four-term president, Franklin D. Roosevelt. The Jews in particular thought that in Roosevelt they had a friend and

We are proud to announce the establishment of the *Science Society of Touro College Flatbush Women's Division*. This society will enhance our college experience and prepare us for life in the scientific community following graduation. Our main goals are to increase awareness of career options and developments in science, as well as to provide an opportunity for students in the science department to in-

teract with each other.

Thanks to all of you who took the time out to fill in our questionnaire, we are now able to plan events based on our interests. Our tentative schedule for the next month will include a hands-on introductory workshop in using the internet in science, a visit to a Gross Anatomy Lab, and lectures in genetics and neuroscience. Furthermore, we are organizing a

booklet on various programs in the Metropolitan area, including prerequisite information for graduate programs.

Our headquarters are on the fifth floor (guess where!), so please be sure to come up and speak to us. Feel free to e-mail us at K12HASYY@vaxc.hofstra.edu. Look out for our newsletter and signs of upcoming events. Looking forward to hearing from you!

The Science Scene

by Gila Weinstein, President
Dvora Shmulewitz, Vice President

The Touro Psychology Club

by Eliezer Jones, President

The Touro Psychology Club is in full force this semester.

We just had our first of at least four lectures this spring. The lecture was on Clinical Hypnosis, given by Chaya Mermerstein, C.S.W. The lecture went very well and the students who participated were very pleased.

The Psychology Club is a service for the students. We provide students with lectures on interesting and prevalent topics in psychology. We provide information on graduate schools, GRE's, and various jobs in the field. All of this information can be found in the Psychology office, (Room 409) along with the journal library that is housed there. We implore all students to take advantage of these services. All information regarding upcoming library hours, Psychology Club events, lectures outside of Touro, job opportunities, in-

ternships, and various other psychology related activities can be found on the Psychology office door, on the fourth floor. Please take advantage of these bulletins.

The Psychology Club publishes a Touro Psychology Journal, *Mind Over Matter*. We are planning to produce two journals this semester, with the first one coming out before Pesach and the second one at the end of the semester. The journal consists of articles on psychology written by students and faculty, either on personal research or personal interests. The deadline for the submission of articles into the upcoming journal is March 10th for the Mens' division and March 11th for the Women's division. We encourage all students to submit articles.

The Psychology staff works very hard at providing these services for students. We hope

that you take advantage of what is being provided. Students should realize that the more they involve themselves in extra-curricular activities, the better their graduate applications and resumes appear. If someone plans on going further in psychology, it is crucial to be involved in the Psychology Club.

Our next event will be a lecture on research psychology, due to student interest. We are planning another Psychology Forum, and we are anticipating a well-known speaker in the psychology community, with G-d's help (and Dr. Gampel's). We will have time for another lecture and we are asking the students to please ask for what they want to hear. If you have any questions or are interested in getting involved in the Psychology Club, please speak to Eliezer Jones, Yossi Grun, Devora Swartz, or Tehila Azar.

benefactor. Many Jews around the country recited kaddish upon Roosevelt's death to memorialize this truly special friend in the strictest Jewish sense.

If this sounds like an idealized picture, too good to be true, it is. In truth this is a gross distortion of the reality that existed. While the streets were the safest in New York and its people so good and civilized, something very wrong was going on just across the Atlantic. Germany, too, was at its cultural and academic peak. The people of Germany were also aptly described as humane, civilized, and smart. Host to the most significant teams of medical and scientific research, Germany indeed was quite advanced. What could possibly go wrong in so magnanimous a society?

However, hidden behind

the facade of cultural advancement, Nazi Germany was rising to power and leaving behind a great toll. At the end of its reign of terror, six million Jewish people were barbarically murdered. Six million! Could one fathom so great a number of lives snuffed out by this mad power? The loss is immeasurable.

Where were the wonderful citizens who had been praised thus far? Why did they stand by idly as the massacre of their neighbors was carried out? Were these cultured, humanistic citizens able to witness history's greatest atrocity without even a silent outcry? Unfortunately, world Jewry was mistaken both in their perception of Nazi Germany and in their view of the performance of Franklin D. Roosevelt. In reality, Roosevelt was a terrible foe of the Jewish people, join-

ing the world in its hushed silence as the infamous massacre was befalling the Jews of Europe. Roosevelt could have saved a nation, but opted instead to be a passive murderer of millions. Reports have recently filtered out of Switzerland highlighting Roosevelt's role in this genocide at our time of need. This was no friend, nor a neutral country. The Jews stood alone then, as they continue to stand alone today.

For a time, German Jews were allowed a measure of tranquillity. They were free to pursue dreams and excel in diverse areas. This G-dly gift, however, was abused. Instead of investing this freedom as a means to enjoy a Torah life, many used this freedom as a means to assimilate into the Aryan culture. As Rav Elchonon Wasserman explains, G-d

continued on page 12

Students Protest for Democracy

continued from page 1



Chaim Estulin before a police cordon at the student protests in Serbia. The three finger salute is the sign of Serb protest.

(Chaim Estulin)

is a self proclaimed anarchist, he is the student representative of his faculty to the student's protest council. He sees no irony in this. Almost every evening, the council meets to discuss and vote on plans for future methods of insurrection. Sunday night, Ivan, along with a student from the traffic faculty and one from communications, was voted to become part of a tribunal that will be able to react more quickly than the cumbersome council; as the students learned quickly, democracy can sometimes be a hassle to deal with, especially in times of crisis.

Along with Ivan and a Dutch artist, who was the only foreigner that I met, I was led to Radio Index, one of only two independent stations in

man, explained, "I hear the cry of freedom!"

At 7:30 p.m., each night since the protests began, apartment windows are thrown open and all forms of noise are blasted to the streets. On every corner senior citizens and tiny tots bang wooden blocks and medal pipes against anything that will create a ruckus. And then, of course, there are the ubiquitous whistles. The state's television stations, nightly, at this hour, present propaganda, euphemistically called "news." As on the radio, the demonstrators are portrayed as traitors and enemies of the state. Video clips show only angles that help maintain the government's claim that the protests are by "a few hoodlums." On a window at the Philosophy Faculty, there is a poster showing the de-evolu-

this country did not persecute the Jews during World War II and that "We too were sent to concentration camps" run by the Croats, under the auspices of the Nazis. I was reminded of our shared conflict with the Muslims and the Germans almost fifty times.

The student protest is a 24-hour performance. They are organized into three shifts; each demonstrates for five hours. The police shifts at the cordon last for the students, donated by the citizens of the city. In a large lecture hall, up a few steps, students relax from their turbulent activities by playing cards and gossiping—they are students, after all. Classrooms on the upper floors have been transformed into a medical center staffed by medical students; the student council meeting room, where plans are mapped out; a press room; a kitchen, and other facilities necessary for the movement.

Monday morning, nirvana was reached: At five a.m. the cordon had removed itself and the students were free to roam through the city. The five thousand students gathered at Kalachava on this early morning began to march. Every block, more and more euphoric students, wiping the

sleep from their eyes, joined in the walk. Lights in the apartments we passed were opened, with gleeful tenants standing at the window waving flags and cheering us on. We passed the Television building; its windows were broken at a previous demonstration and were replaced by

plastic and wood, and dried eggs painted its walls. For two hours we marched, and by the time we returned to the city center, the crowd had grown over tenfold.

The rest of the day Kalachava remained clear, because the students were finally allowed to do their daily marches. I left that night and was told by students that if at mid-day Wednesday the cordon does not return, the students will split into four marching groups, romping through the city and disrupting traffic.

Tuesday was to be a rest day.



Drummers arrive early in the morning to invigorate the protesting students.

(Chaim Estulin)

the country. The other radio stations are controlled by the government and report that the protests are led and paid for by fascists, the CIA, the Freemasons and the Vatican (this country is Eastern Orthodox). I was interviewed and I explained my reasons for coming to this country, which for three years had been cut off from the world due to the trade sanctions imposed upon her because of the war and now is isolated because of its leadership. We were given whistles, whose blast is the symbol of the protest. "Every time I hear a whistle," the host, a large burly, bearded

tion of a man as he sits and watches the news.

There are approximately one thousand Jews in Belgrade. Most support the democracy movement, though as individuals and not as a community because they fear repercussions should Milosevic crack down. There are two *shuls*, though only one functions, and a cemetery which Ivan said he and his friends visit often: "It gives us a special feeling." Recently, a new young rabbi has joined the community. Anti-Semitism is practically non-existent. One elderly gentleman proudly informed me that

ECUADORIAN GAMES

By Judith Fischer

As American citizens, we take many things for granted in the realization that there

are just some things that we will never have to deal with directly. After all, that is why we elect representatives and that is why our forefathers wrote the Constitution.

And thank goodness for that—especially the 25th amendment, in light of recent events in the small South American country of Ecuador.

The 25th amendment provides the procedure for filling the office of the president should he/she be removed from office, die, or resign, but it is the fourth provision of this amendment that we focus on here. This provision points out that when the vice president and either a majority of the heads of the executive departments or a congressionally determined group declare within four days that the president is "unable to discharge the powers and duties of his office," Congress is required to assemble and decide the issue within 21 days. A two-thirds vote is necessary to declare the president unfit, in which case the vice president becomes the acting president. Does this seem confusing to you? Probably, at first. But if you look closely, these are very precise instructions on how Congress should deal with the situation of a leader who is mentally incapacitated. Thus we can sit back and relax, assured that there is a distinct process to deal with a situation such as this. We are lucky; Ecuadoreans were not so fortunate.

After two million Ecuadoreans marched through the streets of their towns and cities, denouncing the ignominies of their president, Abdala Bucaram, he was ousted by the Ecuadorian Congress under the guise of mental incapacity. Other underlying factors were the accusations of widespread government corruption, nepotism, and, of course, his embarrassing conduct that many Ecuadoreans felt demeaned the office of the president.

Bucaram is also known as *El Loco*, which means "the crazy one." He sings! He dances! And in case you were wondering, no, he doesn't play the sax. One has to admit that his behavior is indeed kind of queer. (Yet these very antics have raised probably millions of dollars in aid for Ecuador.)

Unfortunately, Ecuador was not as prepared as we may be. As stated before, if a United States president is believed to be mentally incapacitated, the 25th amendment provides clear instructions for how to deal with him. Meanwhile, the vice president acts as interim president. Ecuador found itself with three people vying for the presidential job, leaving many parts of the country torn over who is the rightful leader.

When Ecuador's Congress ousted Bucaram, they were persuaded by the military to delegate the presidency to the elected vice president, Rosalia Arteaga, until a formal election could be held. However, within a few days she was forced to step down when Congress named its leader, Fabian Alarcon, as interim president, with the condition that a new election would be held within a year.

But all is not calm. Bucaram is currently touring other South American countries to gain support; Arteaga still feels that she should rightfully be reappointed as the interim president—after all, she was rightfully elected vice president and by common sense should hold the position until the new election; and then there is Alarcon, who is now in power and plans to stay there.

Even if Alarcon does remain in power and the many problems that are now facing Ecuador are solved, the people of Ecuador must not forget what has happened. They should look towards the United States Constitution, specifically the fourth provision of the 25th amendment. More importantly, they should amend their own constitution to make provisions for dealing with future situations such as the one they recently faced.

CAREER CORNER

Stephen Stricker, Career Services Counselor

To help students better face the obstacles of the changing and ever-increasingly downsizing economy, Touro College has created a new, yet dynamic office of Career Services, which has the mandate of helping guide students towards the path of a successful career.

This is accomplished through several avenues:

A) Advising students towards a meaningful career and through individual mentoring and consultation.

B) Aiding the students in a more "technical" manner vis-à-vis helping students prepare a proper resume, cover letter and follow-up correspondence in connection with meeting prospective employers.

C) Encouraging students to conduct their own job campaigns through using lists, directories, newspaper advertisements, the internet, etc.

D) Coaching students for job interviews through individual counseling and job preparation workshops which teach students general interview techniques as well as how to field traditional and "trick" questions posed by the interviewer. Students are also advised as to what issues or questions should be posed to the interviewer himself regarding the position sought.

E) Aiding students in obtaining

either a full-time position or an internship, which may then lead to a full-time position.

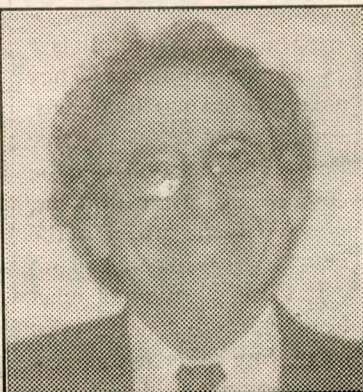
An internship is a position working for a major corporation or organization, usually for 15 to 20 hours per week, in the student's chosen field of study. Most internships are unpaid, however the student will receive three credits of course work upon the successful completion of the internship.

An internship gives the students invaluable experience by allowing them to gain "real world" exposure to the corporate world. In addition, as is often the case, the internship may lead to a full-time position. At the very least an internship adds prestige to a student's resume, which may then help the student obtain a position with another corporation. In today's job market, an internship or even several internships are essential as stepping stones to a full-time position with any type of organization, large or small.

Since 1994, the Touro College Career Services department has been headed by Mr. Stephen Stricker. Previous to joining Touro, Mr. Stricker

was president of his own executive search firm, specializing in placing candidates in the areas of accounting,

finance and marketing. Before working in the executive search field, Mr. Stricker was a tax specialist with a large CPA firm for three years. Mr. Stricker holds a BA from the University of Pennsylvania and MBA and JD degrees from New York University.



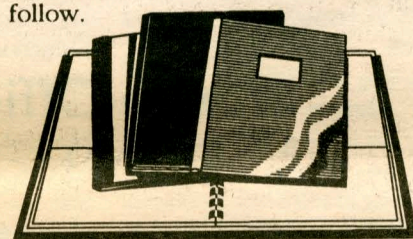
Joining Mr. Stricker's team is Ms. Eileen Shraga, who works part-time at the Flatbush Campus on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and on Mondays at 23rd Street. In addition, Ms. Dorothy Zack works as a career counselor/advisor in Manhattan two days per week. Rounding out the Career Services team, there are four part-time career/academic counselors: Mr. Martin Hershkowitz, Mr. Peter Mandelbaum, Mrs. Toby Jabitsky and Mrs. Renee Blinder, who each are available various hours during the week at Touro's Ave. J campus.

Since Mr. Stricker joined Touro College in 1994, many success stories have emerged for Touro students. In the past several years the Career

Services department has placed or aided in placing many internships and full-time positions with such major corporations as Morgan Stanley; Dean Witter Reynolds; Credit Suisse; First Boston Company; Smith-Barney; Sony Corporation; Goldstein, Golub, & Kessler, CPA's; Citicorp; Bear Stearns; Sunkung Trading Corporation; David Berdon & Company; Goldman and Sachs; and ING Barings. The areas in which these students were placed include accounting, marketing, computer systems, and finance.

This is just the beginning... Although much has been accomplished in the past several years, much work remains, especially in the area of Public Accounting.

One of the highlights of the year for the students is Touro's annual Career Day, which will be held this year on May 6th in Manhattan. This year, representatives of 15 to 20 corporations will be available to meet with Touro LAS students. More specific information regarding this event will follow.



Renee Blinder, Student Counselor

by Chana Torenheim

For many of us, the college experience is simply a deluge of assignments, a packed calendar of social events, and a collection of academic journals for research papers. But have you ever stopped to think what life might be like after school?

Some of the thoughts that may be clouding your optimistic outlook are: "Am I entering the right field? Will I find a job once I graduate? How can I apply my knowledge toward a rewarding occupation?"

While attending school, your academic achievements are of primary concern. However, keeping your ultimate goal in mind will help maintain your initial motivation amidst the frenzied schedule.

The Touro Career and Counseling Center is staffed with professionally trained and highly qualified members who are here to help you make decisions concerning your academic major and career choices, as well as post-college placement. Appropriate services offered by the career department include: Career testing, pre-interview counseling, resume writing, and job placement.

Mrs. Renee Blinder has been part of the devoted counseling team for two years, reaching out to students and demonstrating how the educa-

tional road to a productive career can be enjoyable when making the right choices through proper guidance. Mrs. Blinder was kind enough to share with me the recent progress within her department and would like to encourage more students to make use of the career and counseling services. Mrs. Blinder received her BA in Health Science from Brooklyn College and her Master's Degree in Social Work from New York University. She has been in the social work field for 14 years and practices both substance abuse and mental health and family counseling. She was the first to introduce "couples counseling" at Touro. "My goal is to assist people beyond career choices with problems which impact upon them in their entire lives," she says.

Mrs. Blinder's distinction from the other career counseling staff is that she is a social worker by profession and is committed to assisting people beyond career choices, particularly students who have personal issues and concerns. Touro College is not only concerned with the academic excellence of its students, but it also takes a personal interest in the circumstantial limitations and capabilities of each and every student.

Rather than turning away a stu-

dent who has an extensive need, for example one who may have a learning disability that went by undetected during elementary or high school, such individuals are admitted to the college on a probational basis and are matched with a counselor to facilitate remedial work.

Initially, the career service was established to help students choose a major and a career track. As the department expanded and more staff members joined, the college began to make it a mandatory requirement that all incoming students who were placed on probation see a counselor to support the college adjustment process. Freshmen in particular find the services offered by the counselors helpful. When just starting out at college, there are many decisions to make concerning which courses to take in a particular semester, which major to choose, etc. These decisions can be fully explored and decided upon borrowing the counselors' experience in that area.

Touro College not only promotes academic excellence for the high achieving students, but also consider those students who want to surpass their childhood school performance. Very often Mrs. Blinder finds that "during high school a student did not see a need to study, and upon entering college experienced a change of heart, and decided to do well in higher academic studies." Each student is given the opportunity to communicate her needs, concerns and interest with a

counselor in order to gain an objective perspective towards the college and career road ahead.

"Seeing a counselor is not out of the ordinary, but an ordinary part of one's education. You don't have to be confused, disturbed or unsure to get valuable information," maintains Mrs. Blinder. She suggests that the counseling service is an ideal complement to the academic assistance provided by academic advisors during registration. "We would like to see every student gain from their college education in a gratifying way by avoiding students being placed in a situation where they become too overwhelmed and give up."

Mrs. Blinder is pleased to announce that the career department has made great strides in providing internships and job placements for students. "The department is undergoing some changes and is trying to reach out to the student body of high achievers who are close to graduation and are in the midst of seeking internship positions."

The excitement of graduation should be accompanied by the promising future of a fulfilling job. As the current entry job market is becoming more and more competitive and difficult to penetrate, Touro's career department is expanding and hopes to eventually better accommodate graduates of all majors.

Mrs. Blinder is available in Room 211B at the Ave. J campus on Tuesdays and Thursdays, from 4:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

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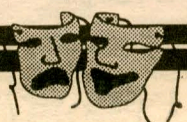
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The Spirit of the Season

The Nature Of Freedom As Connected To Purim

by Steven Genack

The holiday of Purim is approaching. To the Jews it has great significance for many reasons. Most importantly, a totalitarian regime was dismantled and a fatal decree nullified. The Jews escaped physical annihilation and were free to dance in the streets. Any time a people in history celebrate their freedom, it is time for great joy as well as introspection.

One must be agitated to understand the meaning of freedom and how it applies to one's own life. As a citizen of this country it is perhaps our greatest gift, thus warranting clarity in understanding.

There are three approaches to the nature of freedom that shed light on its meaning:

1. The Biblical Approach

The Biblical approach to the issue of freedom is evident in two places in our texts. The Medrash cites on the verse "And the writing was a writing of God, engraved (*charut*) on the tablets" (*Shemot*, 32:16): "Don't read it as meaning 'engraved and set'; rather read it to mean 'free.' " The message here is that the Torah itself is the greatest expression of freedom possible. The second place in our texts is a *Chazal* that says, "The only free man is one who studies Torah" (*Bamibar Rabbah*). Once again, the assumption is that freedom can come only through the study of Torah. The Torah is prescribing a mechanism to reach total freedom—be it political, physical or spiritual—through the toil of Torah.

2. The Conservative Approach

The second approach would be from the conservative school of thinkers. Montesquieu, although a liberal aristocrat, precisely defined the nature of freedom in accordance with this school of thought. He wrote, "Liberty is a right of doing whatever the law permits." This gives a wonderful new perspective on what true freedom means. Only by every citizen following the law can order be maintained and chaos avoided. That



is the greatest freedom of all—knowing that you can walk your child to school and not worry about being hit by a drunk driver. It would be impossible to get hit (in theory) because every citizen's free-

dom is as much as he follows the law. Since all drivers follow the law, they won't drive drunk and thus won't impose on your safety or freedom.

3. The Liberal Approach

The third approach would be that of the liberal school (once known as Democrats). As Aristotle writes (in absolute abhorrence of this system), freedom means: "Man should live as he likes." According to this definition, man is purely free with no inhibitions and no laws to follow (excepting those laws created by himself). Plato defined such a system as "anarchy." Polybius saw this as the last step in a decaying political system. He concludes his treatise with the following statement: "When this happens the state will change its name to the finest sounding of all, freedom and democracy, but will change its nature to the worst thing of all, mob rule."

I was recently in the halls of Touro College and someone said to me that he just wants to be free. I asked him, "Do you mean to say that you have a desire to delve into the Talmud, stand for Jury duty, or hit the bars on the west side?" If we understand the nature of freedom, then we can distinguish clearly between choices and understand our place in society that much better. Rousseau began his treatise: "Man is free but everywhere in chains." He was sensitive to the notion that freedom doesn't exist in a vacuum and must be clearly defined.

As Jews celebrating Purim, we are joyous for the fact that we attained all three freedoms. We got the freedom to once again study the Torah with true fervor, we acquired both freedom from tyranny and the establishment of self rule, and we danced in the streets celebrating our miraculous victory.

Who Am I, What Am I?

by Lara Cooper

A nervous young man had been carefully trained by his well meaning family to lead the conversation at his fateful meeting with his possible bride. He had been told that he must speak about three subjects, each beginning with the letter "F" (food, family, and "philosophy"). The young man was not quite convinced, but obediently wrote down the subjects in his little notebook. At the outing, after the two parties had agreed that it was indeed a lovely day, the young man tried to think of the topics that were to form the basis of their meaningful discussion. Glancing desperately into his notebook, he saw the word *food*. "You like farfel?" he asked her hopefully. "No," came the abrupt answer. Having exhausted that topic, he glanced down at the next—*family*. "You have a brother?" he asked optimistically. "No," came her

carefully articulated reply. This was really going better than expected. Only one topic remained—"philosophy." Pausing for a moment, he then asked her, "If you had a brother, would he like farfel?"

There are a few things to learn from this well-known story. First, we see that conversation in this awkward situation is never easy, and second, that philosophy is not a very popular subject. That which is perfectly straightforward and simple for a regular

person is highly complicated to a philosopher. "How are you?" you might ask, and he would reply "How am I? *Who* am I—to which *I* are you referring? To my physical being or to my psyche, to me ego, or my id?" Surely by this time you have lost all interest in the answer. Philosophers are thought of as people who are constantly questioning whether or not they exist, and whether everything is just an illusion. Constant doubt is fine in theory, but quite annoying in practice.

There was once a man who never had a doubt in his life. Certainty reigned supreme, and where others hesitated he purposefully charted his course of action. His name? Amalek.

He was born to Elifaz, the son of Eisav, and

tinguished, nor does its strength diminish with time.

A reincarnation of Amalek who arose in years later was Haman. True to the instincts of his ancestors, he possessed a burning animosity toward the Jewish people, mounting a campaign to eradicate the Jews from the face of this earth.

The days of exile were days of exile. Thrown out of their land, with G-d's presence concealed, the Jews became weak in their observance of the Torah. They questioned if G-d was really among them, and whether or not they should attend Achashverosh's party. It was then that Haman rose to power. It is when you question, when you show doubt, that an open invitation is given to the enemy.

The commandment to read *Parshas Zachor* and to recall the actions of Amalek draws along with it the importance of remembering his devilish deeds. Doubts and uncertainty act like mud clogging the activity of an engine, causing inactivity.

Thirteen times each day we repeat that we believe "with perfect

faith." If that belief is indeed complete, then there can be no room left for doubt. We have all the necessary evidence. We have experienced an Exodus from Egypt and a revelation at Har Sinai. It is our duty to discern the Divine pattern in the fabric of our lives. Study and thought lead to conviction, which leads to inspiration—the fuel of progress. It is the heat of fire that destroys all doubt, and will ultimately eliminate the arch-enemy of Amalek. *Forever.*



topic remained—

"philosophy." Pausing for a moment, he then asked her, "If you had a brother, would he like farfel?"

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was primed by his grandfather to inherit the hatred directed toward the descendants of Yaakov. This hatred is frightening. Amalek is not impressed by the revelation of Divine miracles. It does not matter to him that his savage attacks will target him for Divine retribution. He attacks without thought of consequences.

His hatred cannot be ex-

FACULTY FOCUS

PROFESSOR NORMAN BERTRAM

Professor of Political Science

Interviewed by Malky Tannenbaum



When Professor Norman Bertram inadvertently bumped into Janet Reno at a museum, he promptly walked over to her and stated clearly, "Ms. Reno, please. Jonathan Pollard. Reevaluate his case." The effect was probably nil, he muses, but, "Here's a woman on vacation, and she comes up against an infamous Jewish lobby! Maybe it had some effect."

Unfazed by famous people, Professor Bertram is reputed to have expressed his opinions at the most inopportune times to the likes of Palestinian Education Minister Hanan Ashrawi and John F. Kennedy, Jr.

"I look at them and they're no different than you or I. We all have the potential to rise to prominent positions, even by marrying into royal family, if necessary," he chuckles.

This total lack of timidity is not surprising; any student of Professor Bertram can undoubtedly recall at least one instance of being shocked by some comment made during class. "I develop a technique which is to startle people sometimes... It's to provoke you to think even more," he remarks with pride.

And provoke he does.

Considered by some to be the best professor in Touro College today, and by others to be the "most opinionated, arrogant, and irrational person on the face of this earth," Professor Bertram is an integral part of Touro College and its Political Science Department.

Professor Bertram's parents were originally from Poland. They were taken by the Russians to Siberia, where they remained for almost two years. When the Germans attacked Russia, his parents were taken to Almaty, Kazakhstan, where they lived for four years. After the war they got married.

Professor Bertram was born in a German DP camp, Traustein, after the war. He was raised in the Rockaways. He attended Brooklyn College for a while, but didn't like it. He then studied at Yeshiva University, but returned to Brooklyn College to take several summer courses. He did graduate work at NYU and got his degree from the New School Graduate Faculty of Political and Social Science. The university's faculty consisted of European intellectuals who fled Europe because of World War II and established a base here in N.Y. After completing his graduate studies in Political Science, Professor Bertram opted to travel extensively over a period of a few years. He served as a political analyst for a short time for American companies in Haiti, but soon went into the real estate management business.

It is besides teaching Political Science at Touro College for the past nine years.

"I consider students to be the future. I have to bring you in terms of politics from the present and prepare you for the future," Professor Bertram explains. Besides, "it's always fun to work with young people because it keeps you young and vibrant, part of the 'now.'"

A self-described A-, B+ student, Professor Bertram admits that he "always worked harder for the teachers that required a lot. I usually found that the ones that required a lot, knew a lot." He values those courses the most, he says, because "they were challenging."

Do Touro students meet the challenges that he confers them?

"I see most of my students as smart, confident, and able to proceed in life successfully after finishing in Touro College." One student, Professor Bertram relates, came as an entering freshman with the reading level of an eighth or ninth grader. After the student did miserably on his midterm, Professor Bertram tried to dissuade him from pursuing the demanding track of political science. The student refused to accept defeat. "I love it," he insisted. When asked why he did so terribly, he ex-

plained that he had gone through the typical Brooklyn yeshiva where secular studies were never taken seriously. All of a sudden he's in college, has a textbook with 1200 pages, and a professor demanding that he read all 1500! Yet despite the difficulties he would face, he was adamant about remaining a political science major.

Professor Bertram recalls telling that student, "If you want to be a political science major, you've got to start reading. Lawyers read. Reading is comprehension. Sit with a dictionary and do what you have to do," which he did, and after receiving a mark in the 20's on the midterm, he got above a 90 on the final.

This student ultimately took 10-12 courses with Professor Bertram and earned mostly A's and B+'s. From this student, Professor Bertram explains, "I learned that if I set the standard and a student is serious, he or she will rise to the standard."

"I'm flexible, but I set a high standard," he adds.

"If they do 80% of [the work], they're still 25% ahead of the game. Though most are serious. I find that students want to go on to graduate schools; they want to be professionals. They need hard work because it's very difficult to compete today, especially when you take the LSAT exams or the GRE exams... If you do the readings and you do the work [of each class], I think that prepares you to easily pass these types of examinations."

And Professor Bertram's students do pass. "All my students get into graduate schools and law schools. Any one of my students who has applied to law school, has gotten into a law school. I'm not saying that's getting into Harvard or Yale, but it's 100% acceptance into graduate school, which I think is a terrific batting record."

Taking offense at the argument that political science is "useless" or "not practical," Professor Bertram defends poli-sci as a significant course of study.

"People equate political science with the actual practice of raw politics, and people got turned off by the practice of politics over the last 10-15 years by what they see in Washington and elsewhere. Political science for most people is the best avenue to go into law school. There are people today who are taking finance or accounting courses and want to combine that with law... I think many people are going that avenue because they're turned off by politics. But actually, political science gives you an understanding of government, of the jurisprudence specifically of the American system and law in the American system. And we offer such courses as Legal Theory, Constitutional Law and International Law, where I teach these courses in the same way they would be taught in law school. We do the case method. This prepares students with actual experience for law school. I require students to brief cases, to discuss cases, and we seriously analyze cases."

Professor Bertram's classes usually contain, besides for the reputed heavy reading load and exhaustive papers, an internet research project. "The internet provides a lot of information. I think it will enrich the educational system by allowing much easier access to that information. The trouble with encyclopedias is that the information is only as current as the date of publication of the encyclopedia. And a journal is only as current as the date of publication of the journal. With the internet you get updates of some areas by the minute."

Other than the internet, Professor Bertram's teaching techniques vary. Videos are an integral part of certain courses, such as Government and Politics of Israel. Courses such as International Organization and The Supreme Court often include on-site field trips.

"You have to innovate," he insists. "You can't teach it any longer in the old-fashioned way and just give lectures."

The fact that there is currently a Political Science/Pre-Law Association is a boon for the department and for the students. "It provides an avenue for students to express themselves in contemporary political issues and provides a forum for outside guests to come speak, which will create more interest in the discipline of Political Science," notes Professor Bertram. "Plus, if they get interesting guest speakers, try to arrange coffee and cake—since the way to an intellectual is through his stom-

ach—and put out a good newsletter, they should be successful."

There was a poli sci association several years ago, in 1991. The problem there was that it was made up entirely of seniors. "Once they graduated, there was no one else to carry on! For perpetuity, get in freshmen and sophomores as well," advises Professor Bertram.

I was fortunate to have had the occasion to ask Professor Bertram the following questions.

MT: Different professors have different styles of teaching. Some will inform their students of both sides of an issue without giving their own opinions in class. They'll say, for example, "If you want to know, come to me after class." Others, such as yourself, will state both sides of the issue, but they'll be very strong on one side. Do you think that's a fair method of teaching?

NB: I think I've adopted a teaching style based on three professors who have influenced me the most. They were also conservative in their thinking. One was a graduate of the University of Basel in Switzerland; one was from the Sorbonne in Paris; and one was from John Hopkins with a degree from John Hopkins and the Mer Yisrael semichah program at the same time. They would present both sides of the issue. They would pretty much tell us at the outset of the semester what their position is. I always appreciated that because I didn't like professors who... played games about telling you what their position is. If for some reason I wouldn't want a student to know my position, I would say, I'd rather not discuss it, I'd rather not give my position on it. So what I do is give both sides of the issue.

The readings that we do are mostly parts of contemporary media or... [writings of today's] intellectuals... basically, [they] are of a liberal orientation. If you read *Foreign Affairs*, *Foreign Policy*, or a book on international relations, it's pretty much left-of-center writings by left-of-center professors, because that's the only way they can exist in universities, certainly up until the last five to ten years. Now there's more of a conservative voice coming out of the universities.

The only time I get very strong in my feelings and sort of tip the scales is certainly when it comes to Jewish issues and Israeli issues. But I don't find any resistance from the students. In fact, some of them voice more extreme positions than I would in certain areas. But at all times they know my position, and if I inject a little passion in my course, well, that's me.

MT: Passion is probably putting it mildly, because you make unkind references to Palestinians and you call people not-so-very-nice terms.

NB: I develop a technique which is to startle people sometimes. There's a movie star John Houseman, who starred in *The Paper Chase*, in which he played a Harvard law professor of contract law. He would sometimes do or say startling things. Sometimes he would even dress down a student, which I avoid doing at all times. When he does drop his guard, he tells students that he does these things to keep them awake and to keep them interested and (paraphrasing him) to "keep the wheels in your mind moving. I want you to learn how to think. I want you to learn how to learn how to analyze. I want you to learn how to grapple with issues." That's my philosophy as well.

I don't really care if, after a student takes a course with me, he or she is right wing or left wing or center. I just want a student to be as well informed as possible and then make his or her own decision. But I want them to know the issues... And if I say something inflammatory sometimes, it's to provoke them to think even more. I've seen the most timid students, as a result of this intellectual provocation, rise up and respond. I love it when I have a class of ten, twelve students, and 45-50 minutes into the class they're all yelling and screaming at each other, debating... Everybody's involved. I'll just sit back and watch them go at it. When I can bring a class to that point, to that crescendo, I say to myself: Bertram, you did it right today.

MT: Do you feel that a professor's personal philosophy affects what he's teaching, even if it's not related to the course material? I'm referring specifically to the infamous case of an engineering professor who published a book of Holocaust revi-

sionism. He claimed that as long as he doesn't teach his philosophies in class, since it's not a philosophy class, he can't be criticized.

NB: It could affect what he's teaching, but he has an absolute right to say what he feels and to publish what he wants to publish... I don't think any knowledge or distortion of knowledge should be stopped from being made available. It's up to the students to agree or disagree. I don't like any chilling effect on any academic type of writings or teachers invoking their own philosophy even within a course. Most of these Holocaust deniers are totally absurd. But the more we hear about them and the more absurd their position becomes, perhaps... it gives more substantiality to those writing the truth. So they serve as an offset.

MT: If there would be one political science course that would be added to the core requirements of every college student, which would you suggest?

NB: I think the school should have a course Introduction to Political Science. That would cover four basic areas of theory, American Politics and Jurisprudence, International Relations, Modern Methodology in Political Science—modern techniques such as the use of computers, databases, research methodologies.

I find that women in Touro enter the political science arena by taking American Politics. The men take Introduction to Political Theory. When you come into an American Politics class, it's assumed that you already have a certain lexicon, a certain vocabulary, certain fundamental knowledge. Some women do, more often the majority don't; whereas guys who go through the Brooklyn yeshiva system where secular studies is not really emphasized, walk into the [Political Theory] course and for the first time they hear names like Plato, Aristotle, or the concept of Sovereignty or the State. It's very hard! If we had an introductory course where we could divide it into the four major sections of the political science curriculum, and give an introduction into what each one of these separate disciplines is about, and students will build up some vocabulary, some concepts, some ideas, I think then they would be perhaps better prepared to take the other courses. Perhaps it would stimulate more interest in the major as well. People would take a chance and try it. We have introduction to economics, to psychology, but not to political science!

MT: What would you be your solution to the Arab situation in Israel today?

NB: [Laughs.] That's very, very difficult. Sometimes, especially when things heat up in the Middle East, I get very drawn into it. I watch the late news and before I go to sleep I'll lie there in bed and say to myself: Yeah, ok, so you're saying all of these things. But let's say you were prime minister. What would you really do? It gets more difficult to answer that question because every time I ask it of myself, it seems the week-kneed Israeli government has given in again, and it makes things much harder to bring back to what I would like to see done.

MT: Do you feel that Netanyahu has, as he claims, no choice but to hand over land to the PLO because the previous Labor government already signed Israel's fate with the Oslo Accords?

NB: I think that's a facade. It would be simple for Netanyahu to do what he originally claimed he was elected to do. He had a window of opportunity presented to him... when the Palestinian terrorists started a new mini Intifada. That was the perfect opportunity to take the so-called Oslo Accords I and II and just rip them up. A contract requires acquiescence on both sides; it's been a one way process. Well, he let that slide. There were so-called drive-by shootings in which people were killed and the Palestinian terrorists, who were condemned but not extradited, are sitting in Gaza country clubs call prisons.

MT: What would you suggest Netanyahu had done?

NB: I would suggest that he surround every West Bank city with tanks. And unless the alleged perpetrators are brought forth and extradited to Israel, where they will receive a fair trial—after all, we gave Eichman a fair trial—I would begin shooting at them. It's war. War is a not-nice business. But if they can keep killing Jews and running to hide back in their Palestinian enclaves, those bees' nests of

terrorism, how good is that?

MT: So how do you feel now with the release of so many Palestinian prisoners?

NB: They'll only come back to kill Jews again. It's outrageous.

I think that what should be done is that Israeli nationalists and those who did provocative acts, including the murder of Palestinians, should also be released.

MT: You have been quoted as saying that all Germans have the potential to become Nazis.

NB: I just can never feel comfortable with them. Although I meet a lot of Germans and they're so pacifistic—they don't even want to tell you they're Germans; they call themselves "Europeans"—and most of them are against all of this skinhead and right-wing people... still, every time I see or read something about the Holocaust and I see Germans who were the most cultured in Europe—university graduates, Dr. Mengeles, people with high degrees—reduce themselves to such animalistic behavior, unseen, unheard of in world history, it's scary. These people can turn on a dime. I can never be comfortable with a German. I can never trust a German. That doesn't mean I can't be civil. I'm civil. But it's almost hereditary.

MT: You mean that on the part of the Germans, it's almost hereditary: their hatred of Jews?

NB: I would say the militarism. Certainly the militarism. And usually when you become militaristic, you need a scapegoat. So who's a better scapegoat than the Jew?

I'll never forget, many years ago, in the mid-70's, I was involved in some kind of business transaction with a German company. The German export manager kept talking to me about politics. I said, "Sir, I'm not here to discuss politics. I'd really just like to discuss our business." He kept persisting. So I said, "Sir, it's obvious that I'm an Orthodox Jew and my parents are Holocaust survivors, and this is a sore issue. I really don't want to talk about it." Well, when pressed about it, I told him my innermost feelings. He said, "I can understand if you don't like us; you don't trust us; you think we'll do it again. That may be and that may not be." This was a middle-of-the-road German! So I said, "You've been asking me questions; let me ask you a question. How do you feel about the division of Germany?" He, in true German form, said to me, "This is the price we have to pay. We lost the war." Then he got this faraway gaze and he lifted his eyes up to the sky, and he said, "but one day when we reunite, the world will once again see the greatness of Germany and its people."

Boy, when I heard that I shuddered. And lo and behold, we now have a unified Germany.

MT: Do you feel threatened by the unified Germany?

NB: I don't see it as a threat in the near future. As long as the German economy is stable and people are making money, as long as the youth are pacifist, as long as the professors in the universities are pacifist, that [atmosphere] will spread down. However, because of its power and position in Europe, Germany will be called upon one day to start acting on a more international basis... When they start to do that, and they have their own military, and they start sending out German peacekeepers, and they start to remilitarize—that's when I'll get scared.

MT: Do you think that will happen with the European Community coming together as it is, or trying to come together?

NB: Many Germans today like the idea of the E.C. because they don't want to be the focal point of European progress and advancement. Thus they could hide within the E.C. But invariably, at one point in time they will dominate the E.C. because of their economics and their output. It's their nature.

MT: If you ever decide to run for office—

NB: Will never happen.

MT: Why not?

NB: I'm too old to play dirty politics. It's really a lowlife position. [Laughs.] Except for sitting on the Supreme Court of the United States.

MT: You repeatedly mention your admiration for Justice Anthony Scalia. What about him leads you

continued on page 11

Outrage Over New Jerusalem Settlements

by Leora Elias

The construction of a new Jewish settlement on Jerusalem's Har Homa is the latest target of global discontent. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has decided to construct 6,500 new homes in order to meet the growing needs of his Jewish constituency. This latest enterprise by the Likud government has aroused a great deal of foreign interest, as well as intense criticism by the Clinton administration. Arabs claim that the settlements on Har Homa, would completely enclose their foreign population residing in the Jewish territories of Judea and Samaria, thus cutting them off from eastern Jerusalem. The Arabs want to establish East Jerusa-

lem as the capital of their state. According to their perspective, the building of this new settlement undermines that goal.

In Israel, throughout the Arab-occupied Jewish territories, a strike was called to protest the Har Homa construction. The *Jerusalem Post* reported that shops and educational institutions were shut and workers took a day off from their jobs. This strike was enforced by Arab police in several areas. According to the *Post*, one shop owner said: "This is a war for Jerusalem for which we can sacrifice our most precious things—our lives."

In Washington DC, Yasser Arafat recently met with Presi-

dent Clinton and State Department officials requesting increased U.S. pressure on Israel to halt Jewish expansion in Jerusalem. In addition to that meeting, Arafat also met with several congressional leaders, Arab ambassadors, the President of the World Bank, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, former presidents, Jewish leaders, the National Press Club, and a dinner meeting of the Palestinian-American Congress.

As of yet, Netanyahu appears resolute in his non-negotiable stance on the status of Jerusalem as the undivided capital of the Jewish State. The Arabs desire East Jerusalem

only because they are aware of what it means to Jews. Mecca is their spiritual capital. By conquering our spiritual capital, they intend to conquer the Jewish people. We are simply allowing them to do this to us through our silence and inaction.

But can we persist in our silence even now? Jerusalem has just entered the auction block. The stakes are high. The Holy City will ultimately fall to the highest bidder.

We have a great deal to learn from our enemies. Where are our boycotts, our strikes, our protests? What massive prayer vigils will we attend? What Jewish leader will petition the White House?

After all, Jerusalem will be sold to the highest bidder.

OD YOSEF CHAI: A PURIM LEGACY

by Staff Writers

The mitzvah of *Matanos Le'evyonim* is a very special mitzvah which is highlighted at this time of year. The most preferred method of fulfilling any precept relating to tzedakah has always been that of *matan b'seser*, anonymous donation. It is to this end that Of Yosef Chai, a non-profit organization centered in both Israel and New York has been established.

The organization, which distributes funds to the poor, is named after Rav Yosef Binyomin Rubin, one of the greatest *gabbai tzedakah* of modern day Jerusalem. What was so special about the manner in which Rav Yosef distributed the funds he collected was the element of secrecy he pursued.

As the highest level of tzedakah distribution, Rav Yosef expended much effort in order to aid needy families without their awareness. In one situation, Rav Yosef conspired with a man's employer to supply him with additional funds by raising his salary. The employee did not realize that the funds for the raise came from the coffers of the tzedakah money raised by Rav Yosef. In this way, Rav Yosef provided the family with the necessary additional funds while maintaining the self-esteem of the father, who believed that he was earning the money through his honest work.

Od Yosef Chai was established in the memory of Rav Yosef, who passed away a few days after Purim in 1977. The name of the organization literally means "Yosef still lives," and in truth, it is within the work of the organization that he does so. Od Yosef Chai provides assistance to hundreds of poor families in Israel and America in the same way that Rav Yosef did—with dignity, often secretly—thus carrying on his great work.

Eleven years ago, the annual *Matanos Le'evyonim* campaign was undertaken. All the fundraising work for this and many other projects is done on a volunteer basis, with all of the funds raised transferred to poor people on Purim day itself. In this way, Od Yosef Chai fulfills the requirement of *Matanos Le'evyonim* for contributors in the most preferred manner, serving as their messengers to distribute donations *b'seser* to truly impoverished families.

Students interested in leading a tzedakah campaign in Touro College are encouraged to contact the Od Yosef Chai office at 633-5299. Funds must be received by March 23 for distribution on Purim. 100% of all funds contributed go directly to the poor families.

BERTRAM, continued from page 10

to favor specifically him?

NB: He's very feisty. Very smart. He's probably the only intellectual sitting on the Court today. His analyses of both sides of an issue are fantastic. And reading his decisions bring me back to the Holmes, Brandeis, Cardozo, Frankfurter era. We lack intellectuals on the court. They're mostly technocrats or people who've been appointed solely on political considerations. [Scalia] has a very sharp, intellectual mind. When they have the oral arguments, the back-and-forth between the lawyers and the Supreme Court justices, Scalia can slice a tomato into so many slices; it's unbelievable. His analysis is incredible. And he's friendly! The chief justice will tear down lawyers, whereas he's very friendly to everyone and destroys them in a nice, calm way. Or their arguments, not the lawyers themselves.

MT: Who do you feel is the most overrated public figure today, and then who do you feel is the most underrated public figure today?

NB: Probably the most overrated public figure is obviously who Bob Grant calls Slick Willie. Never has a president, in my lifetime, been so deceitful, cunning, lying, with the acquiescence of the press... Why wasn't there a Filegate? Why wasn't there a Watergate-type investigation for all this money that Clinton's been getting? He's been ranting out rooms in the White House like motel suites! But at much higher rates: \$500,000 a night, \$100,000 a night. What's going on with Whitewater? Who really killed Vince Foster? What is his wife hiding? If this would have been a Republican or a Nixon-type president, the press would have a field day! But the press is not making it

front page news, and therefore public response is being curtailed. So, he's the most overrated. I think he's just hot air. I don't like him. I don't trust him.

The most underrated and the one the press attacks the most would probably be N.Y. Senator Alfonse D'Amato. People call him slick, a tool of the mob. I think he's a fantastic senator. I know him personally. He's out there all the time for the people of New York. He brings in a lot of money. He brings in a lot of contracts. He fights for all groups, particularly the Jewish group. My concern is what he does for the Jewish community. Just now, this whole business with Switzerland—he brought it to the forefront.

The other person I would say is the most underrated, though not as controversial, is Senator Orrin Hatch of Utah. I think he's brilliant. He's definitely executive material, whether as president, vice president, or a high position in the cabinet. He's a Republican, and he's also a Mormon who wears a mezuzah around his neck and has a bible from Artscroll on his desk. He was instrumental in negotiating with the Soviets for the release of a lot of Refuseniks years ago. He's a good friend of the Jewish community, of true American values and of constitutional principles.

MT: President Clinton expresses education as his main focus for his second term. Do you think that this will put him down in the history books, which is what he's aiming for right now?

NB: Bush wanted to go down as the education president. Now Clinton wants to go down as the education president. In my lifetime, the only true education president was Lyndon B. Johnson. He gave tens of millions of dollars to schools and universities on all levels and fostered the student aid programs and federal student loans, which made it possible for me to get a superior private college and graduate school education. All the others have just been lip service. The only one who came up with anything was Johnson. I wouldn't mind if Clinton did this. But when you still hear stories about schools in

N.Y. still using history textbooks that depict John F. Kennedy as president... where's the money going? Where's the money that we no longer have to spend, at least as much, in the race against the Soviet Union? Why isn't that being funneled into education? Why aren't there new school buildings in the city of N.Y.? Why are there cutbacks? I don't think he's any education type of president.

MT: Now that Madeleine Albright is known to be a Jew, how do you think it will affect her policies? Do you think she will be fair?

NB: This topic has caught my interest a lot. Strangely enough, when she was nominated for the position of Secretary of State, the Times reported that her parents were "political victims" when they fled from Czechoslovakia to London. When the Times says "political victims," I always find that to be a euphemism for Jews who don't want the world to know that they're Jews. I mentioned that to my classes, that she looks Jewish, she carried herself as Jewish. I've been around Jewish people long enough to know what they look like. I looked farther—the press said that she's Catholic, she married someone named Albright, an Episcopalian. I thought, Ok, I was wrong. It came as no shock to me that she was Jewish, in other words.

Will it affect her negatively? No. Will it affect her positively? No. I don't think she's going to change any of her positions... I think she's too professional and above that. Dennis Ross is still in place, who is a Jew and the chief negotiator in the Middle East. Aaron Miller is still at the State Department Middle East desk. I don't think it will affect her one way or the other.

I think she'll have to come to grips on a personal basis of who she is and what she is. And in all probability, a woman in her position is probably better off continuing the way she is continuing. But then again, I'm sure Lubavitch and some other rabbis are trying to bring her back seriously into the fold... Maybe that's a wrong statement. In terms of Jewish theology we should definitely bring her back, but I'll leave that for Lubavitch and other kiruv groups.

But I have no fear that it will cloud her judgment one way or the other. As Kissinger said regarding his actions when he was Secretary of State, his primary interest is to serve the government. That was his job, and that's her job. She has to do what she perceives is best for the American government.

MT: Do you think that her Jewishness will lead to certain people not taking the United States' position on the Middle East peace process seriously?

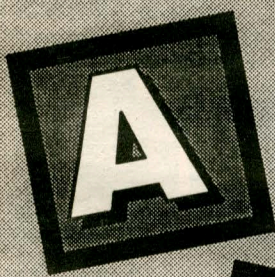
NB: The only people who won't take the United States' position seriously is the Arab states who look down upon women in general. They don't take women seriously; that's part of their culture. They are simply going to look at her as a woman. The fact that she's a Jewish woman will just confirm their dislike. The rest of the world will treat her as just an American woman, Secretary of State, prominent diplomat. Certainly better than Warren Christopher.

MT: In what way?

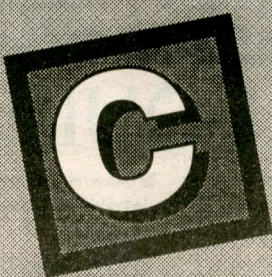
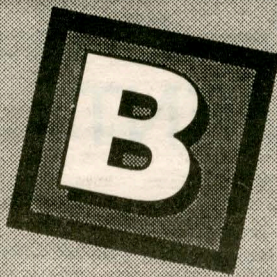
NB: There's more life to her. She's probably smarter. Christopher is a left-over from the fallout of the Carter administration. Christopher was just a technocrat. She's got personality, she has warmth. She has knowledge. When she spoke at the U.N., she often banged out a few very serious points.

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STUDENTS TOUR UNITED NATIONS

by Staff Writers

A select group of students from the Political Science Department of the Touro College Men's Division toured the United Nations building on Friday, December 13, 1996. The students were studying International Organizations and thus visited the United Nations, a central and powerful organization which plays a critical role in the international community.

The tour of the Manhattan complex was part of the ongoing efforts of the thriving

Political Science Department to afford students the opportunity to experience first-hand what they study in class. Accompanied by Professor Norman Bertram, the students



Touring the UN (left to right): Moshe Klompus, Prof. Norman Bertram, Chuck Feuer, Paul Azous, David Greenfield, Yebuda Bruck, and Steven Genack.

touring the United Nations received an in-depth perspective of its structure.

However, the visit was not without controversy. The first sight to greet the students at the start of the tour was a display

on the PLO, explaining its right to membership in the UN. Several students expressed dismay at this apparent sign of bias in the international organization.

Tours such as this one are an integral part of advancing the learning process, since they are an ideal way to learn how issues covered in class are actualized. The Political Science Department is planning many more of these educational trips for future semesters.

The Jewish Action Alliance

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punishes measure for measure. The place where the Jews began their own spiritual annihilation became the source of their physical genocide.

Here in America we enjoy a relatively secure existence. We are free to focus on our service of G-d and build secure Torah lives. Why then must we bring in the trash culture which society embraces? Haven't we learned? We are a nation that stands alone, without friends or allies. We are told that America will be the last exile; let it be one in which we learn

to focus on our spiritual growth and develop a love for all Jews. In that way, G-d will pay us measure for measure and the coming of Moshiah will be imminent.

This is the purpose of the Jewish Action Committee and its flagship publication. It is written in an effort to foster a message in the hearts and minds of Touro College students, the future leaders of our generation. Touro students are doing a noble act by acquiring an education while at the same time maintaining a strong focus on

their ideals. It to this end that the Jewish Action Committee has been established, to continually remind Touro students of this important focus. Every path they traverse and every action they take must fulfill an overall purpose, which is to live the life of a Torah Jew.

Those interested in taking part in the work of The Jewish Action Committee are encouraged to contact Yitzchok Fingerer at 258-2773.



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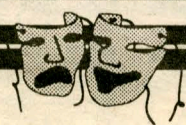
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LEO KLOTZ

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NEWS, VIEWS, AND SHMOOZE



Writer's Bloc



bloc—(noun) A united group formed for a common action or purpose

Here There Be Wonders

by Martin "LabTechGuy" Bodek

I will not soon forget the evening of February 18, 1997. It was an evening of things gone right and things gone wrong; of Murphy's Law and of wonderful Divine interventions; of miserable malfunctions and coincidental perfections.

It started out simply enough. My father, my mother and I had two weddings to attend, one in the Marina del Rey in the Bronx and the other in the Atrium in Monsey. The first wedding went merrily enough, minglings and reunions at the smorgasbord, beaming faces at the dual receptions.

We had to leave before the chupah to make it at a reasonable time to the Atrium. So, parting from one family to join another, we were on our way. At the Atrium, wonderful things happened.

The kallah came in, a portrait of majesty, and danced with her family and friends. She suddenly ceased her twirls to stroll over to the corner of the room to shake the hands of two paraplegic boys. When she was done with her task, she continued her dancing. It was an admirable thing to observe, and the high respect I already had for her angelic character was heightened a hundred-fold.

That's not all that mesmerized me. My family was set to leave, but my mother couldn't find her coat. She had placed her coat in a random area to avoid the wait at the check-in line. We searched and searched and found that some good Samaritan had taken my mother's coat and put it comfortably on a hanger in the coat room. My mother spent ten minutes marveling at the fact that her pockets still had their full contents.

Two small stories, two small evi-

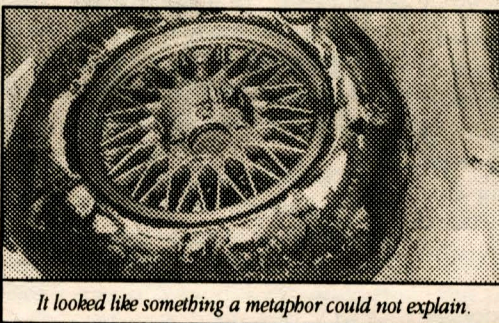
dences of charity. But they were nothing compared to the story that soon developed and the enormous charity we later received. We approached the car in the parking lot and discovered that our right back

tire was flat as a pancake. Fortunately, my father had an air compressor. We sat around waiting for the tire to fill up when it struck midnight. My father got up from monitoring the tire, fiddled about inside the trunk, and fished out a box of chocolates and a birthday card for my mother. Instead of muttering about the flat tire, we spent the next few minutes sharing my mother's happiness.

We finally had enough air to exit the lot, but not enough to drive home. We went from gas station to gas station, searching for air. There were gas stations alright, but no air. We checked four stations, but nothing. So we carried on, hoping to get home before our tire blew out. But the tire *did* blow out. My father pulled off to the side of the road and inspected the damage. I knew it was pretty bad when he said, "Oh, wow. You have got to see this!" So I had myself a look-see and let me tell you, it didn't just blow out. It looked like something a metaphor could not explain. Now we were in the middle of nowhere, with the Washington Bridge lights teasing us in the distance. Now what?

My father got to work unscrewing the lugnuts. He couldn't budge

them. I went to work on the lugnuts.



It looked like something a metaphor could not explain.

I couldn't budge them. Suddenly a car full of Jews pulled up in front of us. Three chassidim stepped out and tried their hand at it too, to no avail. Interestingly enough, they were also coming from the Atrium. My mother was amazed that people actually stopped for us. She was more amazed when they kept on coming and coming. Another small convoy of yiden pulled up and tried their hands at the tire; they failed. My father decided to call for help, and call the babysitter as well, but our phone was dead. Wouldn't you know it, the yidelech were armed to the teeth with tchotchkes. So we called the babysitter and told her our predicament. We were about to call for help when a state trooper pulled up and promised road service in ten minutes.

While waiting in the uncommonly comfortable night air for the road service to arrive, my mother suddenly said, "Hey! It's one o'clock! I can have my chocolates!" She had eaten at the first wedding at 7:00 p.m., was too full to eat at the second wedding, and now was enjoying herself with her birthday chocolates. We were all upbeat about her birthday, the wonderful chassidim, and the comfortable way things were turning out despite our melted tire. To make the situation even more upbeat, we sang "Happy Birthday" for my mom. She

loved it.

More Jews showed up. This time, nine wonderful yidelech popped out of two cars and offered their phones, their wrenches and their general help. It was beautiful. We could have davened ma'ariv; we had eleven yiden right there. Every one of the bochorim took a stab at the tire. Every one of them failed.

Road service finally showed up. The gentleman worked hard at our tire. At that point six cars had stopped, totaling 17 Jews. I was a little upset because the road service person's truck was blocking everyone's view of our vehicle. I wanted to run the tally to at least 20 Jews—two minyonim. Sure enough, a car skipped past us, traveled about 300 feet, and suddenly came zooming back. The sweet chassidim offered their help even though we already had help...wonderful, so wonderful.

We finally made it home at 2:20 a.m., after leaving the Atrium at 11:30 p.m. (I live in Boro Park; you do the math.) We were all beatifically happy. My father had his beaming chocolate-chewing wife, my mother had her yummy chocolates and adoring husband, and I had two happy parents and a story to tell.

As I lay me down to sleep that morning, I ran the events of the evening over in my mind. The charitable kallah, the coat Samaritan, the benevolent highway-stopping chassidim. I summed it all up for myself with a thought as I passed from the land of the awake to the land of the asleep:

Jews are beautiful people.

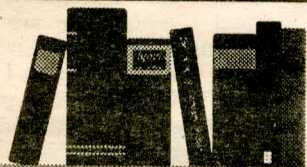
comes close with Shushani, who becomes his master kabbalist, and Dr. Lieberman from the Jewish Theological Seminary (whom he viewed as his master teacher). Wiesel was a scholar who attached himself to great minds. His scholarly manner would ultimately reward him in the publication of over thirty books.

The tone of this novel is one of conscience and introspection. Wiesel analyzes all events in this manner, probing into their farthest depths. As a Holocaust survivor he cannot help but ask, "Do we not have enough sorrow already?" Yet he concedes, "Where G-d is concerned all is mystery." In his relationships, a shy, underdeveloped boy shines through and is able to adapt to the opposite sex only in his late twenties because of his surroundings. His conscience shaped him as so common in the Jewish world. There was only harshness, darkness and gloom, accompanied by sensitivity and probing intellectualism.

Wiesel's life is a true ode to the

"typical" survivor. After experiencing massive destruction, Wiesel moved on to pursue his dreams of journalism. He overcame adversity and thrived in monumental times for the Jews. He followed the development of Israel with a passion. Many of his writings focused on his homeland and its ultimate formation in 1948. Wiesel would go on to become a highly influential journalist, gathering a high profile portfolio of contacts. It was all history from there.

This book has great significance for the Touro student body. I speak not only to Wiesel fans, but even to those who have not yet read any of his previous books. You thus have the chance to begin on the coup de grace of Wiesel literature. Whether unsure of your future profession, riddled by the holocaust or wanting to find a fellow conscientious Jew with whom to identify, you will find all that in this masterpiece. Aside from being one of the most influential Holocaust survivors, Wiesel has also proven that he is one of America's most unique authors.



THE Bookshelf

All Rivers Run to the Sea

by Elie Wiesel

Alfred A. Knopf, New York 1995

ISBN: 0-679-43916-1

Reviewed by Steven Genack

"I see my little sister, I see her with her rucksack, so cumbersome, so heavy. I see her and an immense tenderness sweeps over me. Never will her innocent smile fade from my soul. Never will her glance cease to sear me. I tried to help her; she protested. Never will the sound of her voice leave my heart."

This is Elie Wiesel reminiscing about his innocent sister, whose life was lost in the Holocaust.

Anyone bold enough to confront

such nostalgia will certainly appreciate Elie Wiesel's memoirs. Wiesel addresses all issues from an introspective dynamic viewpoint. This was a product of his growing up during WWII and suffering through the atrocities of the Holocaust. He portrays himself as a conscience-oriented youth growing up in dark times. He found his solace by wrapping himself in the Talmud. He saw in the Talmud salvation from the forthcoming looming horrors.

In this novel you will witness the transformation of a doomed survivor of the Holocaust into a thriving journalist. Wiesel creates bonds with people from all walks of life. He be-



Souls On Sale!

By Ali Wishnev

There's a huge sale at Macy's this weekend. Grab your pocketbooks, girls, and shop till you drop! And since you'll already be in the city, you have to stop by the new Loehmann's. What more could any Bais Yaakov graduate want than five floors of discounted designer merchandise? I am also sure you won't want to miss Bloomie's new stock of handbags. They're carrying leather, suede and black patent this season. After all, the brushed gold clasp on your old Chanel bag has a microscopic scratch on it. You can't let that happen. What will "people" say?

I know you want to look good. So does everyone. I fall prey to the Madison Avenue lure as much as the next shop-

ping bag clad woman. However, as I stroll down the halls of Touro College, I seem to come into contact with the most devoted clients of DKNY and Calvin Klein. King David wrote, "The beauty of the king's daughter is within." I can't help but wonder if we have confused the idea of "within" with that of "without." Princess Di herself could trade shopping tips with the average Touro Flatbush women's division student.

So what is a girl to do? See an exquisitely tailored and *tznius* Anne Klein II suit and walk right past it? That would be tortuous. And G-d does not demand or even want us to look like we walked out of a third-world country. At Mt. Sinai G-d called us a "princely

nation," and we ought to reflect that in our thought, speech, and action—which includes the way we dress. Yet we need to prioritize as to what the focus of our lives should be. That means decreasing the time we spend shopping, applying makeup and achieving the perfect French manicure by at least 50%.

Obviously, we must establish a balance between the *gashmius*, or material aspects of this world, and the *ruchniyus*, or spiritual aspects of this world. Chassidic thought tells us that G-d requests that we make this world a dwelling place for Him. This world contains articles that are holy simply by virtue of what they are, such as a siddur or Torah scroll. Another category of articles

found in this world is called *klipat nogah*. These are items that are not innately G-dly but can be elevated for good, like a cow's hide being used as a Torah scroll. Conversely, these items can be degenerated and used for something unG-dly. A third group of things available on this earth is *shalosh kelipos batemaos*, things that do not have the ability to be uplifted. A pig would be an instance of this, as it is completely forbidden for Jews to eat or enjoy its meat.

I would venture to say that most fine things discovered at Sak's Fifth Avenue fall into the category of *klipat nogah*. I don't care how much you rant and rave, girls—cashmere may look and feel wonderful in the winter, but it is not inherently G-dly.

Yet cashmere, silk, merino wool and the like can be used for the right purpose—that being to clothe the Jewish woman of the 90's. Notwithstanding, a Jewish woman should be the one who has her ideals in perspective as well, thus meaning that our purpose in this universe is to serve G-d at all times and in all locations, including Roosevelt Mall. We don't have to go past our local street corner to comprehend the frightening realities of poverty in the Jewish community. It is horrific. There are children who don't even have coats for winter, and wouldn't know an acrylic sweater from a cotton blouse. Perhaps this is the perspective we must adopt the next time we head to Woodbury Commons.

Blinded by Vision

by Yael Freund

Although my year in Israel moves farther away with each passing day, there will always be memories that will never fade and lessons that I will forever

remember. There is one in particular that I find keeps popping into my head and this leads me to realize how valuable it is.

It was one of those places a seminary girl just "had" to go to for Shabbos. It was what ev-

eryone called a "chavaya"—an experience you had to have in your pocket before you left to America. They were known as "the blind couple" and though I'm sure they had a name, this is what they were called, for in fact both were unable to see. Before I went I thought in wonderment how a couple like this could survive. All the tasks we do everyday that are so simple

are a major undertaking if you can not see what you are doing! I knew that watching these people function over a Shabbos would surely be an experience and it would make me grateful for the vision that I had.

In fact the lesson I learned that Shabbos was not what I had originally thought. Being thankful for what you have is so important and one needs constant reminders of that, but what I learned that weekend was a new lesson one which I hope to live by.

It was Friday night. The whole meal was prepared and served by the woman of the house with little help from us. My friends and I watched in amazement at how she functioned. The way

she poured her husband a cup of juice without it spilling over, the way he looked at us when we spoke as if he could in fact see us, the way they sang praise to Hashem in pure gratitude for their lot in life, we could only be amazed. After the meal there was a knock at the door. The husband went to open it and when he did we were all hushed in what I could only call utter shock and horror. I had heard about such people as the man who then entered the room, but I had never seen it. It was even more horrible than I had imagined. The man had elephant's disease. That is not its real name but it is frequently called that because its victims facial features resemble that of an elephant. It is a sickness that effects cell growth of neural tissue.

I can not even tell you in words what this man looked like he must have lost his sight during the process of this horrible sickness progression. His skin on half of his face was swollen and of a light purple color. His nose and eyes had grown to an inhuman size and his lip hung down past his chin. His body was so contorted that he needed a cane to help him walk. My friends and I were disgusted when we saw this man. It's not that we were being insensitive but his appearance was so repulsive that anyone who would see him would turn away in fright. The man of the house and the man who had come in were old friends, and they sat down together and began to ramble in a Hebrew too fast for us to understand. We just sat there for what felt like forever and stared at the strange looking man. After we caught ourselves we turned back to our discussion with the wife. Yet somehow I could not help but to watch the two men as they sat on the couch and talked. They were laughing together and patting each other on the back as they smiled. They truly were enjoy-

ing each others company. I realized then that if such a man approached me and asked me for even the time of day, I would not be able to answer.

At that point it struck me the lesson I spoke about before. If such a person would speak to me would I be able to treat him like a human being? I would be too blinded by my sight to even respond. These two men had eyes that could see better than mine and eyes that could see more clearly than mine. They had eyes that saw only the heart, eyes that saw the truth in each other. They spoke to one another and paid attention to only their words. There was no superficial appearances to get in the way. They spoke to each other soul to soul, mind to mind and heart to heart.

At that moment and still until today I was envious at what those two shared. How often am I able to speak to someone that same way? Never! When we meet someone we are busy looking them up and down. It's been done to me and I have done it. While the other person is talking we are wondering "I wonder how much she got that sweater for?" or "That lipstick is not her color!" We don't even hear what the other person is saying. In a sense our sight has blinded us to the reality of what other people are. If we would close our eyes to things that make no difference we too would have the vision these two men possess. But how do we ignore this gift of vision? How do we pretend we can not see? This is not easy and the answer is that it takes your heart to help you more than your eyes. Search your heart for what you must look for in a person. Search honestly, accept the answer it gives you and the next time you meet someone your heart will guide you. So as I travel through life grateful for my gift of sight, I will try to remember the lesson of the blind man and search to find the true beauty that lies in every person.

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THE MANIACAL GARDENS

Pesach from a Purim Perspective

By Rifky Buls

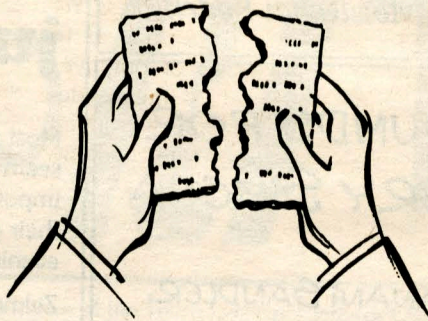
With the coming of Pesach there is one great question boggling Jewish minds across the nation (and possibly the world). This question obviously is what to do this Chol Hamoed. I know what you're thinking (if, in fact, you are thinking): How would someone living in the city that never sleeps possibly be bored? Well, my friends, the sad truth remains that having a bunch of insomniacs around just doesn't liven things up all that much. Aside from that, there are just so many times that even a Jew like myself can visit the all-night grocery. In any case, while trying to figure out what to do this Pesach, I began reminiscing about Chol Hamoeds past. In the spirit of Jewish brotherly love, I have chosen to share with you a fond Chol Hamoed memory.

Ever since I can remember, my family has gone to the Bronx Zoo every Chol Hamoed. Although I sincerely enjoy spending time with animals, you kinda get the feeling you've been there too of-

ten when the cows start recognizing you. So, you ask, why does my family continue to visit the place? Simply because the zoo is fun for all ages, which pretty much means nobody *really* likes it, but well, we go there anyway.

One year, much to my parents' shock and disbelief, my siblings and I came to a unanimous conclusion (which was pretty much the cause of my parents' shock and disbelief). We were definitely, no way in the world, going to the zoo *again*. To quote my brother, "Next time I see an animal, I want it on my plate with some ketchup." Well, I think the message got through (and not just because my mother made pot roast that night). So began the search for a new family Chol Hamoed place.

Many suggestions were made. My mother suggested we go to Great Adventures, but the only ride my father goes on is the carousel. My father suggested we go to the



museum, which was having a book exhibit, but since two of my brothers and my younger sister still couldn't read, the idea seemed kind of pointless. My sister suggested we go shopping, but my brother insisted that aside from it being *asur* (forbidden), shopping just doesn't have that Yom Tov feeling. Instead, he suggested we go to the Baseball Hall of Fame, an idea shot down so quickly we didn't even have a chance to loose sleep arguing over it. I suggested we go to Manhattan, but my brother quickly pointed out that since it was Pesach we would not be able to eat in any restaurants, a thought that made the idea seem somehow less appetizing. Besides, going to Manhattan seemed too normal and commonplace to one of my younger brothers, who wanted to see "The Great American Truck Show-Fifty Tons of Steel and Mud." That idea was also voted out since it sounded so-so how can I put this? *stupid* (yeah, that's the word). There were many other ideas (fishing in the Hudson, visiting at grandma's, rock climbing somewhere). The only suggestion that no one could find too much fault with was, believe it or not, the Botanical Gardens.

This trip started out much like any other family trip. My father came home from shul and waited until my mother finished packing enough macaroons, matzah and gefilte fish to keep us covered in case we got stuck in traffic for several months. After packing at least three different jackets for each of us (in case the weather was vastly different in areas with a high concentration of flowers), we were off.

We piled into the car and our traditional first conversation began: My father told my mother that he was ready and waiting hours ago, to which my mother pointed out that he had just finished breakfast a half hour ago. My father

then explained, "Who needs breakfast? When was the last time you saw me eating breakfast?" As it turned out, according to my father's calculations we were now running 21 hours and seven minutes late. And so they bickered.

We got to the park just in time for the 12:30 p.m. tour. We were introduced to our nature guide, Jet. Jet had long hair, ripped jeans, bandannas tied to everything, and a special appreciation for nature. Jet also had some very special insights; for example, he did not believe in weeding gardens, since, "Like, weeds are not bad, they're just, like, misunderstood." The next hour was filled with ideas such as this one mixed in with lectures on saving the rainforests and endangered species.

Soon we passed several greenhouses and Jet gave us ten minutes explore them. Being Jewish, my family figured what better thing to do on a break than eat? So we stayed right there and my mother handed out some of her matzah sandwiches, borsht and all the other Pesach foods.

It seems that Jet was not familiar with these delicacies. After eyeing them for several minutes, he finally came over

and asked me what I was eating. Well, I know a good opportunity when I see one, and so with all sincerity I replied, "Oh, this? This is a whale sandwich with a side of spotted owl." Yeah, you guessed it. That moment was pretty much the highlight of my day.

After the tour was over, we wandered around the gardens until we came upon a pond of goldfish. This was my family's favorite part of the garden, thus causing my parents to exclaim, "There is nothing quite like the zoo" (although personally, I don't see the connection: fish=zoo?!). My brother found a nice looking tree next to the pond and began climbing it. We were promptly asked to leave the premises, which, I am proud to report, we did with all the dignity and grace we could possibly muster. On the bright side, being kicked out gave us lovely conversation material for the hour, 24-minute and 33-second trip home ("You just *had* to climb the tree, didn't you?").

What will we do next year? The zoo, the park it really doesn't matter. The main thing here is that we're going together, as a family, and as long as we do that, whatever we do, be it space travel or just the library, I'm sure it'll really outdo last year's fiasco. Have a very happy Pesach!

Sweet Shack Update



by Chaim Yablonsky

The response to my article on the Sweet Shack disaster has been so great that a help line and support group was set up to deal with all the people who were inflicted with Sweet Shack Withdrawal symptoms (SSW). Like, *Get Over It - Sweet Shack Withdrawal* support group, better known as L.G.O.I.S.S.W. was set up by people who are concerned with the growing number of people who seem not to be able to come to terms with their loss of good fat-free ice cream and those arcades (oh, those ARCADES! Gimme them back, oh um, sorry, I lost myself).

A 24 hour support phone line was set up by the good people of L.G.O.I.S.S.W., who like to be called The Shack Freedom Fighters. Since it was set up 6 weeks ago it has logged an incredible 19 calls! (If you want to get technical: 10 calls were wrong numbers

and 7 were prank calls...but hey, if you save two people that's as if you saved two worlds). If you feel you might be able to gain something from talking to a Shack Freedom Fighter professional please call 718-ADDICTSSS (Leave out the last two S's for Sweet Shack).

The support group meets every day that starts with an "S". For more information on what time they meet call 718-ADDICTSSS (Over here you can leave in the last two S's since your hands are probably shaking so hard anyway). They discuss how you can get over this problem and move on with your life. I hope you all get the help you need (although I have the funny feeling that if you are stuck on this problem, you have a LOT more problems than this, but, hey, that's just me).

Keep the fight alive!

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Deadline for next issue is
Tuesday, April 15th, 1997

Mazel Tov

—ENGAGEMENTS—

Chana Shifra Hammer to Mordy Edelman
 Perl Kahn to Nechemia Brodt
 Chanala Spira to Eli Lesin
 Esti Wollman to Aryeh Klein
 Goldi Friedman to Avi Kappel
 Rifky Bodner to Moishe Bajnon
 Yellie Levi to Ushi Koenig
 Simi Koenig to Shemaya Eichenstein
 Zahava Mendel to A.J. Sabo
 Shani Lipman to Yakov Majeski
 Leah Krepel to Eliezer Isaac
 Zehava Gelernter to Avromi Taub
 Peshy Raltport to Avrom Dov Waxman
 Miriam Berger to Meir Roth
 Debbie Eldorfor to Yakov Henigson
 Michael Mann to Reena Gordon
 Yanky Mayer to Tzivia Bohm
 Aron Rosenfeld to Adina Fischer

—MARRIAGES—

Ruchie Lieber to Yossi Herz
 Baila Bokow to Mikey Blderman
 Brochi Shurkin to Avrumi Lerner
 Aliza Zilber to Avi Schulhof
 Shana Thav to Pinny Fruchthandler
 Chani Fink to Mordechai Eichhorn
 Mindy Mendelsohn to Yaakov Shalom Max
 Marjorie Stern to Donny Pacht
 Tali Sternstein to Meir Fischer
 Chaya Dina Mayer to Yisroel Grafstein

—BIRTHS—

Batsheva and David Eisenberger—boy
 Yael and Elchonon Neiman—boy
 Deenie and Yitzi Schuss—boy
 Chayala (Jungreis) and Nechemiah Isbee—boy

Bold Type indicates enrollment at Touro College

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**Michael Mann and
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 upon their engagement.
*From Tzvi Hersch Jungreis
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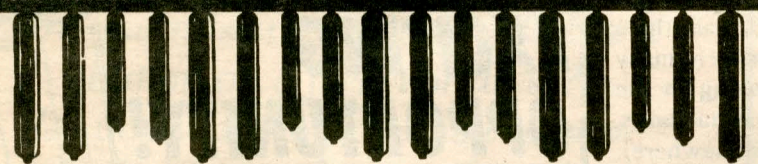
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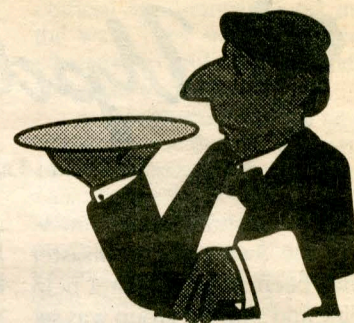
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Two Die in Fireball of Death

by Chaim Yablonsky

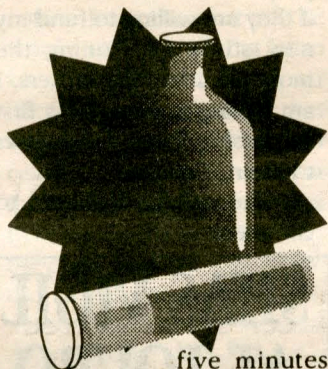
The following information can have very wide-ranging effects and my current enrollment in the college may soon be revoked due to the sensitivity of this information. I accept all responsibility for this article.

On Tuesday, November 12, 1996, at 4:45 p.m. an explosion rocked the Science Lab in the Ave. J campus of Touro College, killing two women. Michelle Gerber and Chaviva Sloan, both freshmen, were ages 19 and 20 respectively. They were killed instantly as a gas leak in the lab exploded and turned into a tragic ball of flames when one of the girls struck a match to light up a quick smoke.

It all started when the two women, friends since 10th grade, went up to the 5th floor at about 4:10 p.m. to practice a lab experiment they had to perform in class the following Thursday. They met three other students at the lab and a professor who, for the purpose of the article, will remain anonymous. At 4:35, the three other students left the lab, leaving the teacher, Sloan and Gerber alone.

According to my sources there was a faulty faucet, and even though a tube was placed around it, there was a crack on its side, thus allowing for the leak. It's unclear exactly who turned on the gas, but at about 4:40 it was turned on. In middle of practicing their experiment, Gerber took out a match and cigarette. The professor saw her take it out and warned her not to light it, but, he claims, she mumbled something incoherent and lit it anyways. They were instantly swallowed up in a ball of flame. Sloan was thrown about ten feet where her head smashed against the wall, cracking her neck and punching a dent into the wall. The explosion blew Gerber onto another table, smashing the table and her back at the same time.

At this point, the professor stood motionless and gaped at the horror unfolding before him. After a few seconds he gathered himself and rushed to the phone to call for help. "It felt as if everything was going on in slow motion...At the time it felt like



five minutes while, in reality, it was only a few seconds...I can still see the girl being tossed into the wall. I can even see the look of surprise on her face. Terrible, just terrible," the professor told me in an exclusive interview.

Because of a miscommunication, only one ambulance came to the scene. Thus suspicions weren't raised and that's what made the cover-up easier. The paramedics rushed up to the 5th floor lab and immediately discovered the girls lifeless. After the police came onto the scene things started to get a bit hectic, but overall everything was kept under control and the number of people asking questions was kept at a mini-

mum. The victims' bodies were brought to a morgue where their families made a positive identification.

Almost immediately, talk of a lawsuit started to be heard. In a surprisingly fast decision, an undisclosed amount of money was offered to both families in return for their silence. The families thus concocted a story that the girls were killed in a car crash, which was somehow believed by all their acquaintances.

The person responsible for the maintenance of the lab was subsequently fired and charges were filed against him for negligent behavior. The charges, however, were later dropped due to insufficient evidence against him. Currently the lab runs on much stricter rules so that a tragedy such as this does not repeat itself.

Every Touro employee involved in the tragedy was forced to sign a release stating that they do not have the right to report any of this information to anyone. They reportedly received sufficient compensation for their si-

lence. The professor who spoke to me felt that he received an inadequate amount to justify his silence, but since he was still working for Touro he decided it was not wise to push the matter. When his contract wasn't extended for this semester and it was made obvious to him that he would never be welcomed back, he decided that Touro had wronged him and he wanted the story to be known. Presently he must retain his anonymity too prevent his being sued.

An interesting side effect of this incident is that in general, all Touro labs are under stricter scrutiny. For example, the computer labs, especially in the Ave J campus, have recently come under heavy attack for their overuse of AOL and printer usage. Even though there are no physical dangers in the overuse, the mere fact that people are taking advantage of, or just breaking, the rules of the labs have angered the administration immensely. Thus they decided to take harsh steps to put an end to it by literally banning AOL in all labs.

Yeshiva of Flatbush Building to be Turned into Parking Lot for Touro Students

by Malky Tannenbaum

The new Touro College Flatbush Student Council met for the first time on February 30th. Their first action was a vote in favor of purchasing the Yeshiva of Flatbush building on Avenue J opposite Touro and turning it into a multi-level parking garage for the college students. (Faculty already have a garage under the Touro building.) This action came as a surprise to students and faculty alike of both institutions.

"No kidding! A parking garage...what a time-saver. How smart," rambled one student in the computer lab. "I knew the council would serve some purpose..."

The necessary renovations are expected to be completed by the end of the Fall 1997 semester. The facility will have room for approxi-

mately 350 cars, and is expected to bring in enough revenue to pay for the council members' graduate school expenses.

"I'm very pleased with the fact that we were able to accomplish so much in such a short time," remarked the council president, Eli Goldstien. "Now that we've created our legacy, we can slack off the rest of the semester and still go down in the Freshmen Book of Senior Legends."

"We'll have to examine the exact proceedings of the council meeting before we can determine whether there was any undue force in use here. It sounds too good to be true," noted a Touro Dean.

"And if something seems too good, it probably is not good at all."

While the Touro College student body was busy rejoicing at the news, Yeshiva of Flatbush students were sitting on their school steps, watching the commotion on Avenue J. The jubilant Touro students were cheering the council members and throwing whatever ticker-tape (or shredded confidential files?) they could find onto their heroes. After several moments of sitting next door and not partaking in the celebration, the Yeshiva students stood up and headed towards their elementary school building in defeat.

"The victory of this acquisition is immeasurable," one Touro student exclaimed.

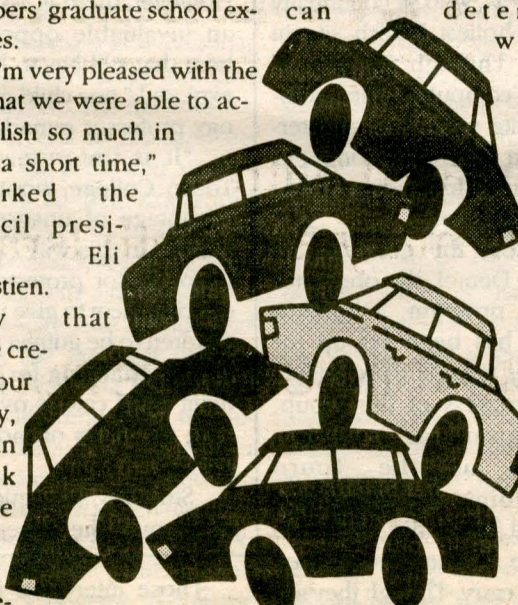
Not so at all, retorts the Principal of Yeshiva of Flatbush. "The decades-old education edifice is going to ruin, almost faster than the

stamina of our more sensitive students. What does it matter how old its occupants are, whether college-age or merely teen-agers? The location has been scarred for life. A pox on Touro College students!"

Responding to that last statement, Goldstien quickly drew out a red string from the Cave of Rachel the Matriarch and explained that "I'm not worried about his threats. I'm protected...and anyways, I know we did the right thing for Touro students."

"Hey, anything it takes to make the students happy, I guess," commented a professor.

The Dean shrugged his shoulders and then said, "I just have one question—where will the mens' classes be held in the summer?"



Stunning DNA Findings

by Malky Tannenbaum

A new study released this month by the Touro College Science department has found enough evidence to support the widespread suspicion that solicitors have a matching DNA sequence. The common link was found in the X-chromosome, thus the trait is not gender-specific.

The release of the study has created an influx of requests by Yeshivas and char-

ity organizations to provide DNA tests for potential fund-raisers and tuition collectors.

"If we can now check out the applicant down to his genes, literally, to see whether he is suitable for the job, we may as well take advantage of the technology available and hire the best person out there," stated one local yeshiva principal.

Several future fathers-in-law have contacted the department as well, inquiring about the possibility of testing their daughters' grooms for that shnorrer-like trait.

"I just want to make sure that the guy my daughter is considering to bring into the family is not dreaming of tak-

ing out of it as much as he can," said Chaim Goldenberg, a successful lawyer from Flatbush.

When asked about the original purpose of the study, Dr. Laughin, the chair of the Science department in Touro, chuckled and stated:

"Purpose? You've got to be kidding. Touro was willing to pay, thus I was willing to research! Do I need another purpose? As a matter of fact, if they are willing to fund my new study on cloning the more effective fund-raisers, I am willing to pledge my first successful cloned fund-raiser to Touro College."

The college declined to comment.

THE TOURO "SHTEIGERS" WIN AGAIN!

by M. Scheiner

The Touro College Men's Division basketball team, "The Shteigers," won the fiercely competitive New York City College Basketball Competition on March 6, 1997. They beat their opponents, the Brooklyn College "Losers," thanks to a last minute basket made by the Touro all-star player, Avrumie Klein. The final score was 94-92.

Coach Heshie Gluck credited the victory to the high focus Touro students are encouraged to attain both on the courts and in class. "Coming in second place is not an option for Touro students. Just as every student graduates with some sort of honors, every player feels he must score the winning shot in the game. This extra drive leads us to victory every year."

In fact, the Touro Shteigers have won eight of the past nine competitions. Baruch Fried, the all-star player for the Shteigers in 1992 who has since gone on to become the chief accountant for the N.Y. Knicks, says that "the can-do attitude of Touro's coaches create the atmosphere of the players' minds. If they instill in our minds that we can do it, we can!"

Representatives of the Women's Division demonstrated their pride in their college by acting as tznius cheerleaders. Instead of dancing provocative steps, they lifted and waved beautiful posters encouraging the Shteigers.

Messages such as "If not now, when?" decorated the colored placards and gave the players an extra incentive to play harder.

"The better we played, the more signs were waved about. When we were

behind, the crowd was filled with confusing messages like 'Go, Losers. Go!' It was driving us nuts. When we were doing well in the game, signs with real messages dominated the area," explained defense player Yisroel Bruden. "Come on Losers you can do it' seems like a joke compared to 'Shteigers are winners.'"

Several Touro students spent the duration of the game demonstrating outside the auditorium. The signs they carried decried the games as "bitul Torah" and "minhag bagoyim." A few students attending the game replied to those charges.

"First of all, basketball is a great form of exercise, and we all know that we are required by halacha to watch our health," pointed out Yehudah Lewin. "Besides, these games are a great way for Touro College to raise funds for various other programs that more directly promote Torah study, such as the free Smichah program for underprivileged students."

Now that the trophy is again secured, Coach Gluck remarked that it's "back to the books" for the students. "I'm sure their professors will appreciate seeing them in class again."

SHAS VIGIL AT TOURO

by Toby Schwarzman

In anticipation of the upcoming Siyum Hashas in September, 1997, members of the Touro College Men's Division have undertaken a monumental task. Traditionally, Purim has been celebrated as the annual reacceptance of the Torah. It is therefore appropriate that the period of time between Rosh Chodesh Adar I and the start of Purim is when this program of Torah learning begins.

Approximately one month ago, twenty students joined together in an effort to collectively complete the entire Shas by sundown on Purim, the fourteenth day of Adar II. Using high speed modem links, the students pledged to spend 24 hours a day for the one and a half months until the start of Purim on this highly dedicated effort.

Using a 24-hour live video feed of the kotel, the students are learning with their virtual chavrusas, who sit continually at the holiest Jewish site in Israel. Through the use of laptop computers, they communicate with their counterparts in the Touro computer lab, using the internet for this holy endeavor.

Under the guidance of Moshe Demol, the originator of the program, a bulletin board has been set up for updates regarding the collective progress of the group. This group of students, known as the Touro Masmidim, are identified around the halls of Touro College by the laptops they always carry. Though they are headquartered in the computer lab, they actually continue to learn over their laptops as they move about between classes.

Camp Touro

by Malky Tannenbaum

Touro College has recently completed its trial run of a day care program for students' children. In order to better serve the community, there is a babysitter available on the premises to watch youngsters below the age of five while their mothers or fathers attend class.



many, especially those who are parents themselves, see the advantages of convenient and reliable babysitting, scores of other students claim that having a class full of crying children at hand will distract them from their studies.

"How can anyone get any work done in a building with little children floating around? This is not conducive to effective college study," stated Yossie N., a sophomore who admits that he does not have children to tend to while attending class at Touro. "I understand that it's more difficult to be a parent and a student at the same time, but if you can't fit college into your personal life, something will have to give. And it shouldn't be other students' peace of mind."

Leah R., a graduating senior, acknowledges that she may find it tempting to "check up on the baby during the five-minute breaks. However, it is possible to separate class time from child time, even in the same building. Especially since the playroom is not located on a floor where classes are actually held."

The playroom, located on the second floor adjacent to the registrar's office, is open five days a week from 9:40 a.m. to 10:40 p.m., in two-hour shifts. Parents dropping off their children are required to show a current student I.D. and pay a daily fee of five dollars per child. In addition, necessary foods and a change of clothes are recommended.

Mr. Mordy Faskowitz, director of career counseling at Touro, notes that "while the close proximity of the students to their children may not be ideal, on the whole this service provides a tremendous window of opportunity closed before to those students with parental responsibilities. This is indescribably supportive of family values for our community."

"We understand that many students arrange for relatives or hired help to watch their kids while they study, but too often a student will unnecessarily miss a class because of a last minute cancellation or inconvenience. We feel that this is a tremendous service to our student body and their academic success," a Dean announced at the ribbon-cutting ceremony of the playroom dedication on February 30th. "Besides, you can argue with the fact that these children will be better off because they are spending time in an institution of higher learning? The atmosphere of intellectualism and knowledge in this building will help shape these children into college-oriented individuals."

When confronted about reports of using these children as case studies for psychology and education courses, department heads failed to deny it but were hesitant to agree with the rumors.

"We would never do anything against a parent's wish. However, there is obviously an invaluable opportunity here that still has to be fully explored," one child psychology professor remarked.

"It is unfortunate that Touro College would take advantage of unsuspecting parents in this way," an ethics professor protested. "By enticing them to give up their children to be guinea pigs by merely arranging for convenient child care is overstepping the limits of moral behavior."

Students are equally divided over the issue. While

Those interested in participating in this great mitzvah are encouraged to contact the Touro Masmidim directly. They are currently accepting donations in the form of meal

sponsorships at the various eating establishments around Ave J. By sustaining them physically, you will receive part of their spiritual reward. *Tizku L'mitzvos!*



In Search of Esther

by Toby Schwarzman

Throughout the year there are many instances when the role of women in bringing about a redemption are highlighted.

Following the calendar, beginning with Nissan, we are met with the dedication of the righteous women who beautified themselves with copper mirrors to entice their husbands so that Pharaoh's decree to kill the infant males would not lead to the complete destruction of the Jewish nation.

Moving through the year we find the bravery of Yehudis at the time of Chanukah; she murdered the Greek general as he lay in a drunken stupor, to save her people. It is in memory of the cheese she fed him in an effort to induce sleep that we partake of dairy food during the eight days of Chanukah.

And finally, we reach the month of Adar and the *mesiras nefesh* of Esther. The very thought of her name recalls visions of grandeur, of a beautiful woman sitting in a palace, risking her life for her nation. Every young girl desires at least once in her life to wear a makeshift costume representing this Jewish princess. But what I desire is to discover the source of her phenomenal strength which empowered her to stand up to Haman, a powerful enemy, and face up to the mighty king she knew as her husband.

In my quest for Esther's secret, beyond the intangible construct we read in the megillah, I begin to look around me at the those I have come in contact with. I searched the modern day women that I know with the qualities of Esther who can open up the mysterious secrets of the woman who saved a nation just by the power of her silence. For it was by obeying the command of Mordechai not to reveal the nation she called her own that Esther succeeded in bringing about the downfall of Haman.

Ultimately I do discover my Esther, through a journey that reveals what it is that crowns one with the title of royalty. There are two women that I come up with, separated by continents and beliefs, though in my mind they are

drawn together by a common fire that burns within them. I will tell you their stories.

No matter how much I forget of the year I spent in seminary in Israel, I will always remember the Shabbos I spent at Ulpan Akiva in the Green Beach Hotel in Netanya. What brought me there on that Shabbos in May was the amazing woman who ran the Hebrew language Ulpan on the grounds of the seaside resort. That I have not seen her for two years has not diminished the memories that bring a warm glow to my heart every time I think of her. Her voice, her message, and the fire that emanated from her, drawing me to its warmth, kindled a desire to be like her.

She is characteristic of Jewish women throughout history who captured people with their dedication and idealism. She has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize, she has spoken to presidents, senators and all kinds of local and international politicians. Her work has been highlighted by the United Nations as a model for peaceful relations between warring parties. For what this woman runs is not simply a language clinic, but a place where Arabs and Jews gather together and bridge the age-old gap that exists between them through learning each other's languages.

Jews learning Arabic and Arabs learning Hebrew doesn't sound like much, and the idea of dealing with the Arabs may cause some people to recoil in horror, but believe me, I was there, and I saw it in action. I saw Arabs watching while this woman lit candles as they joined their Jewish brothers in welcoming the Shabbos with an innocent curiosity. No, she did not seek out converts to Judaism. Instead she preached understanding so that Arabs and Jews should be able to do what is necessary if the State of Israel will ever have real peace—live side by side and accept the fact that bridges cannot cross the boundaries of all differences. In the female soldiers spending their tour of duty learning the language through which they will be able to teach Arab children the password to a life beyond the pit of poverty, and in the Arab pre-med students who come to learn how to communicate, both verbally and non-verbally, with their future Israeli classmates in the

medical schools where they will train, I saw the key to the future and the secret to peace. Yes, we are told that the enemies of the Jewish nation are imbued with a genetic hatred that descended at Har Sinai, the mountain whose name comes from the root of the word *sinah*, hatred. But I also know that forces beyond our control are demanding that the daily possibility of war cease to exist as a constant threat. And they will attempt to bring this about in any way they see possible. (So while the Nobel committee nominated this woman, instead they awarded recognition for efforts of peace to individuals who *attempt* to bring peace at the expense of our very existence!) Thus, I find myself enticed by this woman's ideas and the small way in which she makes a difference in a country where both sides seek to see the other gone, in a country where the two parties do not communicate in the same language.

And so, on my list of possible modern day Esthers I put her name, the queen of Ulpan Akiva, the woman who uses speech, similar to the way in which Esther used silence to save a nation from an eternity of persecution and war. Yet I go in search of others, again searching for a soul worthy of the title of a Jewish princess who became a Persian queen.

A continent away I found another modern day Esther. During the winter she holds court in a rented bungalow in Desert Hot Springs, California, an enclave of Jewish snowbirds who escape the cold of the East Coast and head west to the warmth of the desert.

My visit to my grandmother opened up my awareness to a world of Jews of which I had been unaware. I learned of groups of Satmar chassidim, as well as others, who take over parts of this resort area in the winter months, setting up minyanim, shiurim, as well as separate swimming. And at the center of it all is one woman. Diminutive in stature, she is the second candidate that I come across in my search of a modern day Esther.

Shabbos in Desert Hot Springs turned out to be surprising. In the hotel where I stayed there were many Jews, but I did not realize the extent to which they populated the town until I tried to enter the small bungalow set aside

as the shul. With women greatly outnumbering men, there was barely breathing room for the fifty women sitting in a room with place for thirty. Yet they managed to make room for me. By offering me a seat, they enveloped me in the warmth of their community.

After davening I was invited to partake of their kiddush and then their *shaalos seudos*. And it is then that I experienced the greatest surprise. The Rebbetzin, the heartbeat of the temporary desert community, no longer has a husband. He passed away a year before. So though men are invited to partake of her chulent and kugel, they do not join in the festivities that swirl around her. She is the eye of the storm, the heart of the gathering.

She is, in effect, the first female Rebbe that I have ever met. Her chassidim range from elderly women who speak most comfortably in their native Hungarian tongue, to Bais Yaakov girls visiting during their intercession, with representatives of many factions. She is a Rebbe of people united by the bond of womanhood and Judaism. It was there, both at the kiddush and the later at the *shaalos seudos*, that I was lucky enough to experience for the first time what must draw chassidim around the *tish* of their Rebbe. I sat there in a small room full of women of all ages. I was uplifted by the words of Torah they asked me to share with them, and by the stories they related in a language with which I am not altogether familiar. Yet their joy and warmth transcended the language barrier, and some part of me understood what they are saying in their stories and in their songs. They sang *Sola Kokosh*, the song of the redemption in their native Hungarian tongue, and its haunting melody invited the angels down from heaven as the Rebbetzin held court. I felt then more strongly than ever before that I am part of the chain of women who pass on the religion of our forefathers to every child we bear, a descendant of the women who opted to sacrifice their children rather than let them live without a bris milah, the sign of a Jew. We are the imprinters, the mothers of the past, present and future, and the mothers of moshiach. It was

in this dance of joy that I joined the women around the Rebbetzin's table.

I've since come home from my desert visit, though every Shabbos I remember the joy, dedication and warmth of the Rebbetzin and her chassidim. And now I sit here thinking, searching for an answer. Who is Esther? There can only be one modern day daughter of the Jewish princess who became a Persian queen. And I know intuitively who it must be.

The proponents of the First International Conference on Orthodoxy and Feminism held on February 16-17th in New York City may believe that feminism and orthodoxy, once viewed as an oxymoron, are now compatible. They believe that women can best find expression for their spiritual inclinations by emulating actions historically attributed to men.

Though seven hundred women and a sprinkling of men showed up at the conference, displaying worldwide support for the issue, I feel that these women are making a fundamental error in their understanding of the role of women. For what my search has led me to understand is that the spiritual daughter of Esther, no matter how great a statesman and savior, cannot be celebrated for her speech, though she may be the greatest of communicators.

The daughter of Esther must value silence and create worlds through her silent communication.

That is the secret of the Jewish feminine celebration. Historically women have been the driving force behind many important events, though always from within the tent. As the verse in Bereshis says, "*Hinei Sara B'Ohel*," (Behold! Sara is within the tent). The passage of time cannot erase what is the defining characteristic of the Jewish woman—the modesty of silence. Thus the creation of female minyanim as well as calling girls up to the Torah is the antithesis of Jewish femininity.

And so I have my Esther, I have the modern day role model for the Jewish woman who strives to reach the level of a savior of nations. She does not raise her voice to gather the masses around her. She does not focus herself in the spotlight. Instead, she starts by drawing a circle, and with her silent glory, her silent fire, she draws people into it. I walk in her footsteps.

לך דומיה תהילה
Silence is her praise.

A Purim Survival Guide

by Leora Elias

Understanding *Megillat Esther* within its historical context reveals many stunning parallels that exist between the Purims of yesteryear and the Purim of the present day. The history of the Jewish people comprises a cycle of events within a state of constant rotation. Simply stated, history repeats itself. We have a choice in each generation to either learn from the lessons of generations past, or repeat their same mistakes.

Like those of modern times, the events that we read about in the Purim Megillah were the product of a whole progression of events. Haman did not by magic appear. We, the Jewish people created him! We facilitated his arrival by not considering the consequences of our own poor judgment. And we needlessly suffer today on account of our gross apathy and inaction. We do not know when to act, and thus we seldom react. We don't know how to feel, so many don't feel at all. Let us consider the consequences of our silence, evident in the terrifying bus bombings that marked last year's Purim. Have we indeed cause to celebrate this year, as our brothers in Israel yet mourn? How soon do we forget?

While many of our parents were fortunate to witness the miraculous rise of the third Jewish commonwealth, due to a lack of Jewish leadership, blatant lack of faith and concern, it now crumbles before our very eyes! The prophet Isaiah described such a scene when he prophesied: "Your country is desolate; your cities are burned with fire: YOUR LAND, STRANGERS DEVOUR IT IN YOUR PRESENCE..." (Isaiah-*Haftarat Parshat Devarim*). Is this not the sad reality of our day? Even sadder still is the awareness that it could have been so different, if we had only recognized the error of our ways. All our suffering could be prevented if we chose to learn from past mistakes. There are many lessons to be learned from the events related to the holiday of Purim. If we are wise, we would apply those lessons to defeat "Haman" today.

The Lack of Jewish Leadership

According to the Talmud, the Jews of Mordechai's and Esther's generation were worthy of extermination because they attended Achashverosh's party. They not only attended, but derived pleasure from it. The *Me'am Loez* points out that their mere presence at this event was sinful. The question is, "Why?" After all, what is so bad about attending a party? To answer this question, the issue was not the party itself, but what it represented.

The Jewish Identity Crisis

Achashverosh's vast empire consisted of 127 provinces which extended from one side of the globe to the next. The Persian empire was a world power. The city of Shushan, as its royal capital, was at the center of it all—"the big apple." Achashverosh's motivation for throwing the grand scale bash was mainly political. He wanted to gain the loyalty of his subjects. But there was also a very wicked cause for his celebration: Having miscalculated the years of the Jewish exile, as numbered by the Prophet Jeremiah, he arrived at the notion that the Jewish commonwealth would never again be restored. "Achashverosh rejoiced in this frustration of Jewish hope" (*Midrash, Ibn Ezra, Artscroll Tanach series*). The Jewish inhabitants of Shushan attended a banquet celebrating their own demise! They simply identified themselves as Shushanites, Persians "of the Jewish persuasion," not realizing that they were forfeiting their pride as well as that of their fathers, and in so doing, they were poking fun at themselves. (Does any other Jew want to go visit the Pope or shake Arafat's hand?)

How could there exist such a moral flaw within the Jews of Shushan? In Eichah it is written that when G-d exiled us, he compared us to a flock of deer that find no pasture and are without strength before their pursuer. The Talmud explains that the leaders of *Am Yisrael* were compared to deer because they did not rebuke one another. "As deer turn their faces one beneath the other in intense heat, Israel's leaders would see a transgression committed and turn their faces [deliberately shutting their eyes to evil]." G-d said, "A time will come during exile when you will go into captivity like pastureless deer when I will do the same to you [I will turn my face away from you.] (*Shabbos 119b*). During Purim, G-d hid His face from us. In Deuteronomy (31:18) G-d alludes to that time, when He told Moshe, our teacher, "I will hide my face from them..."

Despite the tendency of the Jewish people in those days to turn their eyes away from the transgressions of their day, Mordechai and Esther were different. When Esther relayed a message to Mordechai that the penalty for approaching the king without being summoned was death, Mordechai warned her against placing her own safety first. He warned her that although, through her silence, she might manage to save her body, her soul would not be saved (*M'nos Halevi*). Esther was encouraged by Mordechai not to keep silent. He insisted

that if she kept silent and failed to act on behalf of her nation, she would never be able to justify her inaction. Furthermore, the deliverance would come from some other place, perhaps through the intervention of a foreign king who would kill Achashverosh, and then what would become of Esther his queen? (*Me'am Loez*, etc...)

Esther could not hold her peace, and neither may we. America is a world power as was Persia, and we Jewish Americans live in the lap of luxury (at the moment) assuming that our silence will keep us safe. But for how long? If Israel is not allowed to thrive, no nation in the world will flourish. If we do not speak out on behalf of our people and our land, what will become of us, when the G-d of Israel finally pours out His boiling cup of wrath? How long can the name of G-d be defiled? How long can we keep silent?

The Origin of Haman—Misplaced Jewish Sentiments

In the Torah it is written: "If you do not drive out the inhabitants of the land from before you, then those that you allow to remain shall be as thorns in your eyes, and as pricks in your sides, AND THEY SHALL HARASS YOU ON THE LAND IN WHICH YOU LIVE." (Numbers 33:55). (Sound familiar?)

The *Midrash Rabbah* on *Megillat Esther* applies this scripture to King Saul's war with Amalek. Saul took pity on their King Agag, and the best of their herds and did not completely destroy them as G-d commanded (Samuel 2, 14:9). From Agag descended a person who would inflict upon Am Yisrael hardships like thorns in their eyes and pricks in their sides. According to the *Midrash* this is Haman, who decreed to destroy, slay, and cause to perish (*R. Levi*).

In *Talmud Yoma* it is written that King Saul was very much concerned with the great loss of life involved in the war with Amalek. He reasoned that since the Torah requires the elaborate ritual of decapitating a calf in the valley upon the discovery of a dead murder victim, the value of life must be very great. He said: "If human beings sinned, what has the cattle committed? And if adults have sinned, what have the little ones done?" (Hence the theory of the "innocent" Palestinian.) The Talmud states that a Divine Voice came forth and said: "Don't be overly righteous." A person should not attempt to be more merciful than G-d (*Yoma 22b, R. Mani*).

Thus the war with Amalek gives us one reason why our encounter with Haman was entirely preventable: had King Saul not have had mercy upon

his true enemy and had he instead killed him, as he was commanded to do, then generations later, another enemy—Haman—would never have risen. But there is also another way in which it could have been avoided: through the return to Eretz Yisrael.

When Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Holy Temple and exiled the Jewish masses, hundreds of Jews were mercilessly slaughtered, and the remainder taken captive in chains. Many nations relished in the destruction of Jerusalem, i.e., the Ishmaelites, Edomites and Moabites (among others) aided Nebuchadnezzar by *volunteering* their help (much as the Bosnians, the Poles and the Lithuanians aided Hitler y"s). The captives were ordered to march quickly, without rest. The Princes of Judah were bound in chains and forced to carry on their backs sacks made out of holy parchment that were full of sand. To disgrace the captives, they were also forced to march unclothed (Louis Ginzberg, *Legends of The Jews*).

Somewhat suggestive of the modern day Holocaust, in many respects, those who witnessed the wrath of Nebuchadnezzar experienced a "Holocaust" all their own, as we read in the Passover Haggadah: "In every generation they rise up to destroy us..."

Under Cyrus of Persia G-d Gave Us Another Chance

The Prophet Jeremiah prophesied that the period of desolation would last 70 years. After the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, his successor, Belshazzar, was assassinated and the Babylonian empire fell to Medes and the Persians. Under the new ruler, Cyrus, there was a wonderful turn of events. Cyrus issued an edict to the Jews of his vast empire inviting them to Israel to rebuild the Holy Temple in Jerusalem. Forty-two thousand Jews headed back to the Holy Land, while the majority remained scattered throughout the Persian empire.

Why didn't we return?

One would imagine that only 70 years after such a horrific tragedy befell them, our ancestors would have run home to their land, overjoyed at the amazing news; how much more so because it was prophesied to them earlier and was now coming true! In Isaiah, G-d states concerning Cyrus: "He is my shepherd, and all my desire he shall fulfill, and to say of Jerusalem, 'It shall be built, and the Temple shall be founded'" (Isaiah 44:28).

But only forty-two thousand? It doesn't seem to make sense. Should they not have

jumped at the chance in light of their terrible situation? What was their "terrible" situation? For the time being, Persia seemed to be working out. Jewish people were getting used to their new environment, learning Torah, earning a livelihood—not too bad until...Haman. As we all know, there is nothing like a "good" dose of Haman to give a Jew a reality check.

But back then, Jews questioned the obligation to return to Eretz Yisrael (as we do now). Some rationalized that as long as G-d had sold them into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar, they should probably just stay put. The *Gemara Sanhedrin* (105a) compares this state of mind to a divorced woman who is separated from her husband. But wherever we are cast, we belong to our G-d and we have only ONE home. The galus mentality is what extinguishes the drive of the Jew to return home. It makes him believe that Zion is not essential to Judaism, that galus will somehow suffice. But this mentality is born of a false sense of security within the lands of the diaspora. For at the very moment we are met with hostility, where do we turn? To our forgotten dream.

As soon as the Almighty gave the Jewish people the chance to return, they should have taken it. In Isaiah (45:1) we find: "So said the L-rd to His anointed one, to Cyrus..." Our sages have explained that G-d here is addressing the future Messiah. G-d complained to him that had Cyrus completed his task of restoring the Temple, there would not have been a third exile at all. "The redemption would have been complete in its time" (*Chidushei HaRashba al Aggadot Hashas*). The doors were open via Cyrus for a comparatively short time before they were closed again by his successor Achashverosh. Eventually the doors would be open again under Darius, the son of Esther, but had we all returned when G-d gave us the opportunity, Haman would never have posed a threat and the Messiah would have arrived early!

Just fifty years ago, the doors were again miraculously opened in the aftermath of a more recent holocaust.

Are we ready to leave our "Persia"? The Jews of Persia dealt with Haman for all of the reasons that have been presented. But by a divine act of mercy their generation triumphed over the wicked plot of their adversaries. Due to the efforts of two courageous, awe-inspiring Jews named Esther and Mordechai, G-d enacted His will and through them justice prevailed. They were willing to sacrifice their own lives for the sake of their people—more importantly, for the sake of *kiddush Hashem*.

Our generation could use our own Mordechai and Esther. The question is, "If they arose in our generation, would YOU recognize them?"

